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The Sky's the Limit

. . . for Michelle Dennard and her colleagues as they revolutionize schools in one of America's fastest-growing counties.

See page 4

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PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

Bush's Mid-term Report Card

Late last month, an Associated Press reporter asked me to assign a grade to President Bush's performance as the "education president." I gave the President an *Incomplete*. That may have been overly generous.

More than two years have passed since Candidate Bush declared his intention to become the Education President. More than a year has passed since President Bush convened the Education Summit. And more than six months have passed since the President and our nation's 50 governors pledged their commitment to six national education goals.

Today, those pledges are beginning to ring hollow. Where are the initiatives that would give life to those goals? Where is our national leadership? Where is the performance that gives meaning to promises?

The answer to all these questions is the same. With a few exceptions, initiative and leadership are "missing in action"—or, more precisely, missing in inaction.

President Bush has done virtually nothing to advance the education agenda. He is setting a bad example, and too many governors are following it.

Before assigning President Bush his mid-term grade, I reflected a good while on two prime-time television specials that aired in early September. These CBS and PBS programs took millions of viewers inside America's public schools. Both productions offered fascinating snapshots of teachers, support personnel, principals, students, and communities at work. They showed us how dedicated local citizens, working in concert with school employees, are transforming their schools.

NEA President
Keith Geiger

In the process, these documentaries uncovered one of our nation's most closely guarded secrets: America's schools are improving. They're improving because so-called ordinary citizens are doing extraordinary things. They're improving, most of all, because more and more Americans are saying that when the issue is the future of our democracy, the buck stops here.

This Truman-esque advance is taking place step by step, school by school, district by district.

All of this vindicates us—and our Association. All of this offers proof that we've been right to insist on site-based decision making, right to insist on the empowerment of school employees, right to insist on less bureaucracy and more democracy.

And we've been right when we've said over and over again that the most important sentence in the now-faded document called *A Nation At Risk* is the statement, "Our schools can rise no higher than the communities that support them."

Our local communities are delivering. As the PBS and CBS documentaries demonstrated, we are witnessing the creation of an American partnership for improved education.

That observation brings me back to President Bush's report card.

The national education goals that the President and our nation's governors championed are now within our reach. But they're not within our grasp. Why?

The most obvious answer is also the most accurate. One partner in America's partnership for improved education just isn't doing its part. One partner is too passive, too idle.

I'm referring to our federal government. More specifically, I'm referring to President Bush—as well as to a good number of governors and other elected officeholders who have chosen the President as their role model.

The cause of improved education would be better served if more of our nation's elected officials chose their role models from among the people we saw at work in the PBS and CBS education specials.

As advocates and activists for education reform, the American people deserve an *A*. They've earned it. And every day they're continuing to earn it. It's not too late for President Bush to become an active member of this national coalition. But unless he completes assignments long overdue, his *Incomplete* will become an *F*.

The President is only half-way through his term. He still has time to turn things around. Like all Americans, I hope he does.

If reform is to continue, we need a President who will buckle down and do his homework. We need a President whose final grade, despite mid-semester difficulties, is a solid *A*.

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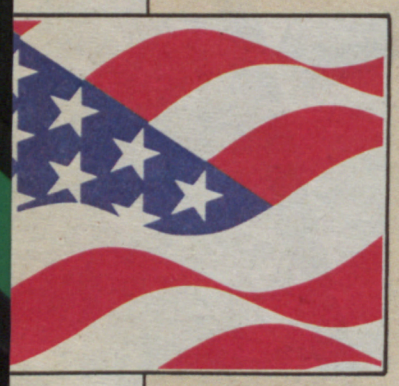

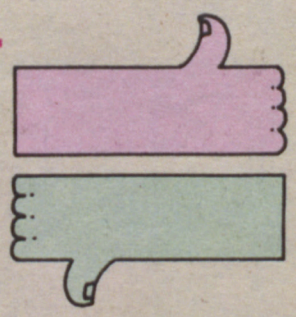

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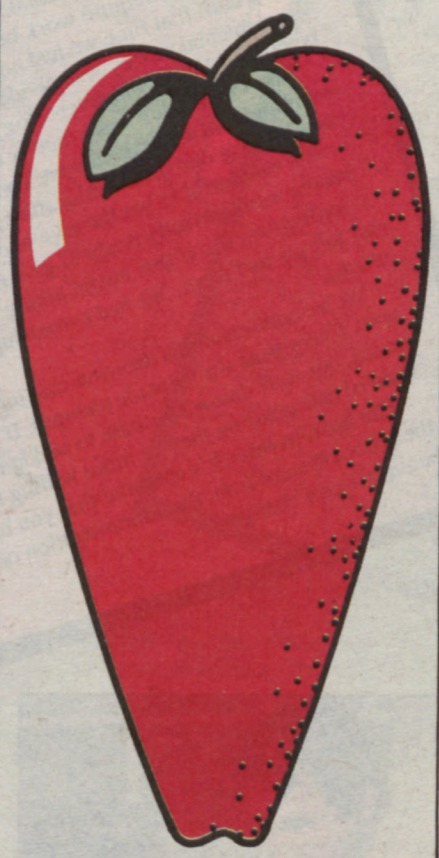
NATIONAL NEWS

THE BIG SQUEEZE

Across the nation, school districts are feeling the financial pinch brought on by a host of problems.



The economic signs of the times aren't good, and that's bad news for public schools. States across the nation are now bracing for recession. In some, the recession has already arrived.

Recessions mean lower tax revenues at every level of government, and those lower revenues translate into squeezes on state and local school district budgets for education.

Recession, unfortunately, isn't the only current squeeze on the dollars available for education. Helping turn the vise even tighter are—

► the higher gasoline and oil prices ignited by the Persian Gulf crisis.

► the savings and loan scandal. To attract buyers for bankrupt S & Ls, the government bailout effort has handed wealthy investors a variety of tax breaks that have already cost state and local governments $40 million in revenue.

► ever-rising health care costs, which are diverting local school district dollars from instruction and salaries to health care premiums.

No state has felt the squeeze more than Massachusetts.

Once touted as a miracle because of burgeoning technological industry, the Massachusetts economy has plummeted with the speed of a stock market crash. When the state faced a $600 million budget cut last year, $300 million was taken out of education funds.

"Our class sizes are increasing, reform programs are being eliminated, and we're unable to negotiate raises," says Rosanne Bacon, the president of NEA's state affiliate, the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

Last summer, after a 4 percent cut in state aid, the city of Worcester cut $2.7 million from the local school budget.

"We immediately lost all our elementary libraries and our reading resource teachers," recalls Worcester Education Association President Maureen O'Sullivan. "Education shouldn't be the key to balancing the budget, but we're an easy target."

NEA members in Worcester fought back, organizing 1,000 people to march on city hall. The pressure stopped $500,000 in cuts that would have meant the elimination of 80 teachers.

But Worcester's elementary libraries remain closed, class sizes keep increasing, and schools struggle on without resource teachers. To add insult to injury, a statewide tax rollback plan on the November ballot threatens hundreds more jobs and school programs.

The Massachusetts story differs only in degree from the situation in many other states. In Virginia, for instance, schools are threatened with the loss of more than $122 million in state aid.

Rosanne Bacon

In Virginia's Loudoun County, school officials expect to cut $7.2 million from the school budget by increasing class sizes and cutting back summer school, athletics, elementary art and music, and driver education programs—among others.

Ironically, last month's headlines about school cutbacks in Virginia came almost exactly one year after Virginia made education headlines of an entirely different sort. Last fall, in Charlottesville, Virginia, President George Bush joined the nation's governors in a historic education summit.

Out of that summit came a set of ambitious goals for improving education by the year 2000. To meet these goals—which range from cutting the dropout rate by two-thirds to making sure that every child who enters school is ready to learn—the President and the governors will have to undo the tightening squeeze on local school budgets.

So far, there's little motion in that direction. In Washington, D.C., the White House and Congress "are playing at the margins," says NEA Capitol Hill lobbyist Mike Edwards.

Neither lawmakers nor the President, explains Edwards, are coming to grips with the two factors that fueled the out-of-control federal debt in the 1980s: the $1 trillion military spending build-up and the $1.7 trillion cut in taxes for America's wealthiest taxpayers.

"Until those two budget-breakers are faced squarely," says Edwards, "our nation won't be able to make the investment in education that our real national security demands."

The president of NEA's Massachusetts affiliate is even more blunt.

"If the federal budget status quo continues," says Rosanne Bacon, "it will sound the death knell for education in my state."

Worcester schools have already revised busing and school-day schedules, eliminated administrative and support positions, and cut back on books and supplies, says Worcester Education Association President Maureen O'Sullivan, and members are tired.

"We'll never give up fighting for our schools," O'Sullivan adds. "But why do we always have to go begging for them? After all, this is *public* education, isn't it?"

—Anita Merina

Looking Ahead

- **Election Day, November 6. Remember to vote!**
- **American Education Week, November 11-17. Celebrate in your local.**
- **National Urban Education Summit, January 13-14, Washington, D.C. President Keith Geiger will represent NEA.**

A Healthy Walk

Hats off to the hundreds of students at Fargo (North Dakota) High School who walked out of homeroom classes for several days in September to protest the school's use of *Channel One*, Whittle Communications' ad-laden classroom TV news program. Students said the program was too immature for high school juniors and seniors. The Fargo school board now says it will reconsider the Whittle deal.

Spirit of Giving Award

A few Bethlehem (irony noted), Pennsylvania, parents are suing their school system over a new program requiring students to perform 60 hours of volunteer work over four years. "I don't want my son to be told what to do," said one parent. "I went to school in free America, and I want the same for my children."

Silver Anniversary

The much-touted federal Chapter 1 remedial education program celebrated its 25th anniversary in Washington, D.C., last month. Kudos to teachers and NEA members Bruce Smith (Kentucky) and Douglas Straight (Nebraska), who flew to the capital for the 25th anniversary hearing to testify to the program's success. Darts to the politicians who tout the program's success but continue to underfund it. The justly celebrated Chapter 1 help reaches less than half the children who qualify for it.

Silver Foot

From the mouth of Vice President Dan Quayle: "Quite frankly, teachers are the only profession that teach our children. It is a unique profession and, by golly, I hope that when they go into the teaching field that they do have that zeal and they do have that mission and they do believe in teaching our kids and they're not getting into this just as a job or a way to put food on the table."

Best Priorities

More than 70 world leaders gathered at the United Nations in New York last month to listen to the cries of children. Each day, about 40,000 children die from preventable diseases like measles, whooping cough, tetanus, pneumonia, and diarrheal dehydration. The leaders pledged a global campaign to reduce infant mortality by one-third, reduce malnutrition by half, and eliminate polio altogether in the next 10 years.

COVER STORY

The Sky's

What if your district officials told you "the sky's the limit" on re-structuring? Would you be able to take your dreams for needed reforms and turn them into reality? NEA members in Pinellas County, Florida, one of the largest school districts in the U.S., have launched a bold experiment to do just that.

REDISTRIBUTING DOLLARS

Janey Ball
Fifth grade teacher
Blanton Elementary School

We were part of a pilot program that involved elementary teachers from 11 schools. Our job was to set supplemental salaries for teachers with leadership roles that require work beyond the regular school day. Up until that time we had no control over how the supplemental money was divided up. Each of us would simply be given $250 or whatever "for your assigned responsibility." When we sat down as a faculty and listed the leadership tasks, we found that all of them were compensated, except for coordinating our special education program.

It's wonderful to see the give-and-take of staff—in that case, people were perfectly ready to give money to the special ed coordinator even if that meant taking it from other areas. We all felt we had input. We had ownership over the decisions made.

We've continued this decision-making process for four years now. Every year we've made changes. If another problem arises, our staff doesn't hesitate to tackle it. Once people get a taste of restructuring they're more willing to give their time.

The bottom line: It's essential that you have total support of the school system from the administration on down before you begin to make changes.

It's been a quiet rebellion here," muses Michelle Dennard, a speech therapist at Maximo Elementary School. "We're convinced that top-down administration leads to apathy. Shared decision making leads to better change."

The rebellion has had plenty of room to develop: Pinellas County is a very large district. Its education employees serve some 93,000 students at 128 schools in the Clearwater-St. Petersburg area, located halfway down the Gulf Coast of Florida. With 5,100 members, the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association (PCTA) is the third largest NEA local in Florida.

The rebellion also has broad and deep support. When PCTA set out to make its district an NEA Learning Lab site (one of a dozen in the U.S.), it was required to demonstrate the district's "willingness to change."

Evidence wasn't hard to find: in Pinellas, school employees, administrators, and the community were already joined in making educational change—and had been for the past four years.

Don Macneale says changes in the Pinellas schools will come from teacher initiatives.

The changes in Pinellas County began in 1986, when St. Petersburg High School was invited to participate in NEA's Mastery in Learning program, which was designed to help NEA members identify and implement needed school improvements.

The Mastery in Learning program found a welcome reception among local school officials. Frank Pesuth, a human resource executive who was then a school board member, called worker involvement programs "long overdue" in public education.

Financial assistance came from the five-year-old Pinellas County Educa-

COVER STORY

the Limit

MASTERING THE SCHEDULE

Rob McMahon
Seventh grade science teacher
Bay Point Middle School

We worked to get faculty control over the master schedule for the school year instead of leaving it to the administration. We agreed to handle every part of the job, including the computer work.

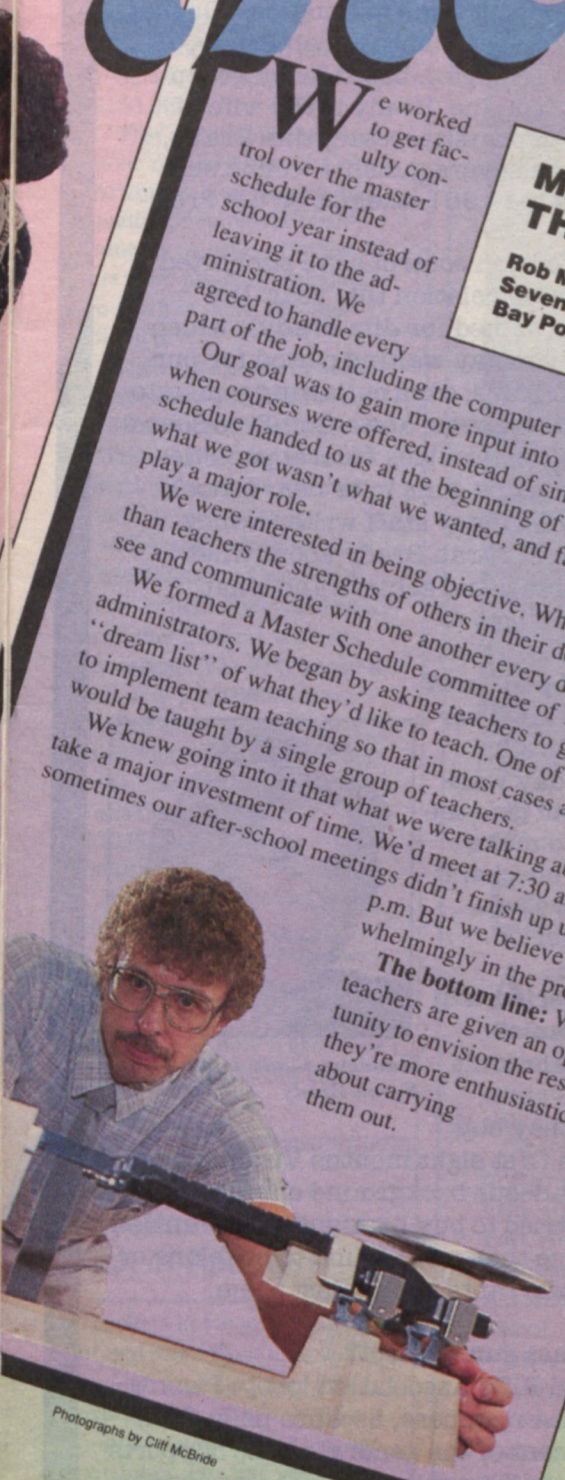
Our goal was to gain more input into who taught what and when courses were offered, instead of simply having our schedule handed to us at the beginning of the year. Quite often what we got wasn't what we wanted, and favoritism seemed to play a major role.

We were interested in being objective. Who knows better than teachers the strengths of others in their departments? We see and communicate with one another every day.

We formed a Master Schedule committee of 11 teachers and administrators. We began by asking teachers to give us a "dream list" of what they'd like to teach. One of our goals was to implement team teaching so that in most cases a student would be taught by a single group of teachers.

We knew going into it that what we were talking about would take a major investment of time. We'd meet at 7:30 a.m., and sometimes our after-school meetings didn't finish up until 7:30 p.m. But we believe overwhelmingly in the process.

The bottom line: When teachers are given an opportunity to envision the results, they're more enthusiastic about carrying them out.



Photographs by Cliff McBride

RETHINKING CLASS TIME

John Johnston
Special education teacher
St. Petersburg High

Probably the most enduring innovation we instituted has been our school improvement committee, made up of some 30 representatives of the faculty and administration. One of our first orders of business was to look at how to restructure the schedule of the school day to maximize learning.

The idea of going to a block schedule of four periods with each class meeting every other day for 100 minutes was something we'd discussed for awhile. We decided to poll the faculty and students; the results convinced us to try it. The faculty was 64 percent in favor; the students, 79 percent.

When we tried out the block schedule last year, most people liked it. But we ran into a serious problem: the block schedule doesn't match the county's computerized attendance program.

For now, we're back on the old schedule. But as soon as we find a way to work with the computerized system, we'll go to block scheduling.

The bottom line: You can get a lot of satisfaction in working for the good of your school.

Maximo Elementary speech therapist Michelle Dennard believes shared decision making leads to innovation at the local school level.

tion Foundation which expressed interest in providing grants to help pay for restructuring. The Foundation has launched an Education Leadership Initiative as a means of garnering private sector resources to support school restructuring in Pinellas.

In negotiations, meanwhile, PCTA worked to clarify the district's policy on restructuring. The result: a 1988-91 teacher contract mandate that schools be encouraged "to develop programs that provide means to meet the district's goals and objectives through a site-based decision making model." The Board and the Association agree to "provide resources necessary to help schools that wish to participate."

Finally, in 1989, PCTA President Don McNeale came to the conclusion that before the district could pursue restructuring dynamically, it would have to organize a body that would encourage change.

Macneale worked with district administrators to form a steering committee of teachers, PCTA leaders, and administrators. One outcome: The district's newly formed Center for Educational Research and Development, which will spearhead the restructuring projects that will make up the district's Learning Labs programs.

But the Center will only coordinate and support restructuring efforts, stresses Macneale.

"Whatever reforms take place will be the direct result of teacher initiatives," he explains. "Some schools may never initiate anything. But those that do are going to own their reforms. And because they own them, they're going to make them work."

Adds PCTA Vice President Doug Tuthill: "Our schools are becoming more exciting, more democratic places. We're working to develop students who are active producers of knowledge rather than passive consumers."

—Vicky Lytle

HUMAN RIGHTS

Fighting the Fringe

After a long search, school employees in Greenfield, Iowa, chose what they thought was the best anti-drug program for their students. But a radical right group almost kept this PTA-endorsed program out of the schools.

At the end of the last school year, when Susan Olesen and her colleagues at Greenfield Elementary School in rural Iowa weighed the needs of their students, social skills came high on the list.

"Most of our students were doing well academically, and most came from solid families," says Olesen, a special education teacher with 18 years of experience. "But we worried that the kids lacked the self-esteem and coping skills they needed to say no to peer pressure."

At the same time, the district had to respond to a state mandate that called for substance abuse education for all elementary students.

It was then that Greenfield teachers and their principal, Bill Raasch, discovered Skills for Growing. They thought this program, developed by Quest International with the help of the Lions Club International, would fulfill both goals. About a year after its release, more than 3,000 schools in the United States and Canada were using the program. And several mainstream organizations, including the National PTA and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, supported it.

Little did the Greenfield group know what was in store for them.

When the faculty tried to adopt Skills for Growing, right-wing extremists staged a fierce-opposition campaign. One parent, incited by criticisms of the program she'd heard on a local radio station, initiated a community drive against implementation. She and her neighbors organized a petition drive to prevent the board from putting the program into place. If the program came into the schools, they threatened, their children would go out—permanently.

As soon as the parents made their move, the Greenfield educators swung into action. Special education teacher Susan Olesen further researched the program with help from the Office of Drug Free Schools in the U.S. Department of Education. She found that Skills for Growing is one of several curriculums for teaching K-5 students about substance abuse. It involves parents, educators, and community members. Its activities teach decision-making skills and boost self-confidence and peer support to improve a child's ability to make good decisions.

Why do right-wingers object to the program? According to the August 1990 issue of *Concerned Women*, the publication of Concerned Women for America, Lions-Quest programs teach children not to trust their parents.

One eight-year-old child who went through a Lions-Quest program plugged his ears when his parents gave him directions, charges psychologist W. R. Coulson in material distributed by the California-based Research Council on Ethnopsychology. After the Lions-Quest program's five problem-solving steps—identify, brainstorm, consider consequences, make a decision, and evaluate—Coulson adds "if still conscious," implying that the next logical step is drug abuse.

But the five steps didn't threaten a study committee appointed by the Greenfield school board: they recommended that the schools use the Lions-Quest program. Nor did the problem-solving process frighten the board, which adopted the recommendation by a vote of 5-0.

The issue at Greenfield was a basic one: how to teach children self-discipline. Olesen and her colleagues believe that schools should teach youngsters to make decisions through logical problem-solving rather than through unquestioning obedience.

"The decision-making model certainly doesn't undermine family power," says Oleson. "Rather, the right wing's obedience model abandons a lot of children to families who are preoccupied or abusive.'

Looking back on her experience, Olesen sighs with relief but is quick to suggest ways for other targets of right-wing attack to fight back.

To her colleagues in Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, and Texas—now engaged in similar battles over Lions-Quest programs—Olesen advises, "Call on your local Association for help, stick together, talk with mainstream parents, be open to all parent ideas, and—above all—uphold fundamental education principles."

For information about the right-wing attacks on Lions-Quest programs, including Skills for Growing (K-5) and Skills for Adolescence (6-8), contact Technical Assistance Department, Quest International, 537 Jones Rd., P.O. Box 566, Granville, OH 43023-0566.

The Lions-Quest Skills for Growing program for kindergarten through fifth grade is the target of right-wing extremists, even though the program's used in more than 3,000 schools.

—Mary Faber
NEA Human and Civil Rights

WASHINGTON WATCH

Putting Guns on Safety

► Take this statistic: the firearm murder rate for youths 15-19 more than *doubled* between 1984 and 1989—from 4.1 to 9.1 per 100,000 youngsters.

► Or this: in the last four school years, 71 people—65 students and 6 school employees—were killed by guns in schools.

It's no surprise, then, that gun control is a major NEA lobbying issue in Congress. Or that the NEA works closely with Sarah Brady, chair of the Washington-based lobby group Handgun Control, Inc. Brady is the wife of former Reagan press secretary Jim Brady, who survived a severe gunshot wound sustained during the 1981 attempt on the President's life.

Lobbyists for gun control have supported three pieces of legislation this year: the "Brady Bill" (named for Jim Brady), which requires a seven-day waiting period for purchases of handguns; a bill outlawing semiautomatic assault weapons; and a Gun-Free School Zones bill, which provides federal penalties for having or using guns in or near schools.

Recently *NEA Today* staff writer Nancy Needham asked Sarah Brady about what these measures could achieve and what stands in their way.

Can laws stop killers?
Laws can make fewer killers. The Brady Bill's seven-day waiting period will give the police time to make background checks. It can also serve as a cooling-off period.

Joe Di Dio

Handgun Control, Inc., Chair Sarah Brady

A waiting period will catch criminals?
Yes. Criminals don't always steal guns; sometimes they buy them. In the first eight months Virginia has had instantaneous background checks, 673 people who tried to buy handguns were turned down because they were found to be felons or had felony warrants out against them.

Who's against gun control?
The National Rifle Association lobby. I won't even say NRA members, because polls show that 72 percent of the general public supports a ban on assault weapons; 95 percent support the seven-day waiting period.

A 95 percent approval rating means a bill shouldn't be a problem for any politician. All the professional groups—the NEA, of course, the doctors, the Bar Association, police groups, trauma groups—favor the Brady Bill. It's hard to believe it's not a done deal.

But it may not be. What can individual NEA members do to get gun control passed?
Stay interested and stay involved. Before Election Day, find out where your federal candidates stand on the three bills. The NEA has already written every member of the House to vote for the Brady Bill.

Local Look

ARIZONA

Tombstone EA Stops Underspending

At the end of the 1987-88 school year, the Tombstone school district sent $250,000 back to the state. At the end of 1988-89, the district sent back $150,000.

This at a time when Tombstone ranked 174th of 175 Arizona school districts in quality of employee health benefits. A time when teachers were jumping boundaries to teach in more generous districts.

Then Tombstone Education Association President Fran Atkinson made budget presentations to the school board, alerting the media to her actions.

TEA also helped set up a Parent-Teacher Organization—which discovered on its own that teachers were demoralized. The PTO began to ask why $250,000 was returned when the teachers didn't have decent health benefits. The result of those efforts? In 1989-90, only $10,000 was "left over" in the budget.

How did the district spend the money?

"They didn't spend it on us," Atkinson says, "but at least it was used in Tombstone schools. The only reason they spent it at all was our complaints."

ARKANSAS

Fayetteville Teachers Sick of Apathy

Teachers in Fayetteville expected more from their community. For one thing, they expected citizens to vote for a 6-mill levy to pay for teacher pay hikes. For five years, Fayetteville teachers had been forced to settle for raises that didn't keep pace with inflation.

So when taxpayers turned down the millage hike, Fayetteville teachers staged a two-day "sick-out"—with the support of the school board and administration.

Speaking before some 500 teachers and community members at a rally during the sick-out, FEA President Pat Waldren explained that the teachers took sick leave for the two days to "jolt the community out of its apathy."

FOR KIDS LEFT BEHIND

Denis Finley/*Virginian-Pilot*

NEA members are helping children cope with the pain of separating from their parents who are called for military duty in the Persian Gulf.

Easing the Pain of Separation

As the Persian Gulf crisis continues, educators are trying to make school a warm and comforting place for students whose parents are overseas—and nowhere more than in schools located on stateside military bases.

At Fort Bragg, North Carolina, displays of Persian Gulf scenes fill classrooms and halls. Clocks tell the time in the Middle East. And red, white, and blue ribbons, distributed by the Ft. Bragg Education Association, adorn the doors of every school.

FBEA members are also working with the crisis intervention teams that are helping students and families cope with the changes Operation Desert Shield has created.

"This deployment is unusual because more single parents, more mothers, more couples are being sent overseas," says Association member Kay Stuertz, a counselor in the Ft. Bragg Schools.

"Children of both military and nonmilitary personnel in this town are feeling tremendous pressures. We want school to be as normal as possible so youngsters have a safe haven where they can talk about their concerns," adds FBEA President Sue Tinsley.

"Our members are using a peer helper program, trading ideas for the classroom, even working to set up a Big Brother program as part of their efforts to ease the strain, for students and parents alike."

ILLINOIS

Putting Out Money For Their Minds

As a recently promoted assistant maintenance worker at Rolling Meadows High School in the Chicago suburbs, Mike Soto needed to know more about boilers. His district was supportive; once he passed the 12-week course, they said, they'd reimburse him for the $300 fee.

But to Soto, the promise of future reimbursement was cold comfort. "I didn't have the money to put up front," he explains. So he borrowed it—from his union.

For the past year the Central Maintenance Association of District 214 in northern Illinois has been running an Educational Loan Program, a $5,000 fund supported by union dues for members who need no-interest, short-term loans to take courses related to their work. Once the members pass, the school district reimburses the union.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

All Pain, but No Visible Gain

Franklin teachers negotiated a 16 percent pay hike for this fall—and got no raise at all. Instead, the state Public Employee Labor Relations Board (PELRB) ruled that the school board and city council could invalidate the Franklin Education Association's 1989-92 contract—including also a 12 percent 1991-92 increase.

Although the raises, negotiated last winter, left Franklin teachers' pay still below the state average, they were too much for the city council. The council found—and used—a contract provision stating that the school board wasn't bound to uphold any item that required the expenditure of additional public funds.

Although the PELRB ordered that a new contract be negotiated, the school board has already spent the money set aside for raises (purchasing, among other things, a new ice machine.)

The state supreme court recently ruled that the second and third years of contracts must be upheld if the voters approved them when the contract was ratified. That decision can help Associations bargaining in the future.

WASHINGTON

Video Lessons Turn Off Community

Evidently the Yakima school board thought it had a good idea. After members of the Yakima Education Association walked off their jobs to protest regressive contract proposals, the district responded by urging students to get their education via TV.

Both the school district's cable station and the local public access station aired videos of teachers taped during past lectures, workshops, and homework hotline sessions. The district also published what it called "student lessons" in the local newspaper.

But the plan backfired. Instead of supporting the district, parents were outraged. The result was the best settlement ever for YEA.

President Melanie Mitchell says the local emerged with key contract provisions intact. Among the highly prized clauses YEA fought to preserve: language covering teacher evaluation and freedom for teachers to use their own methods of instruction.

State Side

LOUISIANA

Association Takes State to Task

Unconstitutional! That's the verdict ofthe Louisiana Association of Educators on state practice in two key areas. In one of two lawsuits, LAE seeks to prohibit the State Department of Education, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Attorney General from using a new statewide teacher evaluation program to revoke Louisiana teaching certificates.

Says LAE President Linda Day: "The Louisiana Constitution states clearly that the right to hire and fire teachers belongs only to the local school boards."

LAE's other suit challenges the state's funding of parochial schools with block grants from an education enhancement fund. LAE and the Louisiana School Boards Association are asking the federal district court to order an immediate halt to the funding, which they believe violates the principle of church/state separation set forth in the U.S. Constitution.

WISCONSIN

Educators, Public Issue Report

To ensure that educators, parents, and the general public set the state's education reform agenda, the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) recently issued an "Educators' School Improvement Report."

Based on surveys of the public and of WEAC's 58,000 members, the report proposes "commonsense ideas from those who are most affected and from those who know best what will work," says WEAC President Richard Collins.

Among other things, the report calls for:

► More staff involvement in all school decisions, including hiring.

► A limit of 15 students for prekindergarten through third grade classes.

► Paid release time to allow working parents to attend school conferences.

► Beginning teacher induction programs involving mentor teachers.

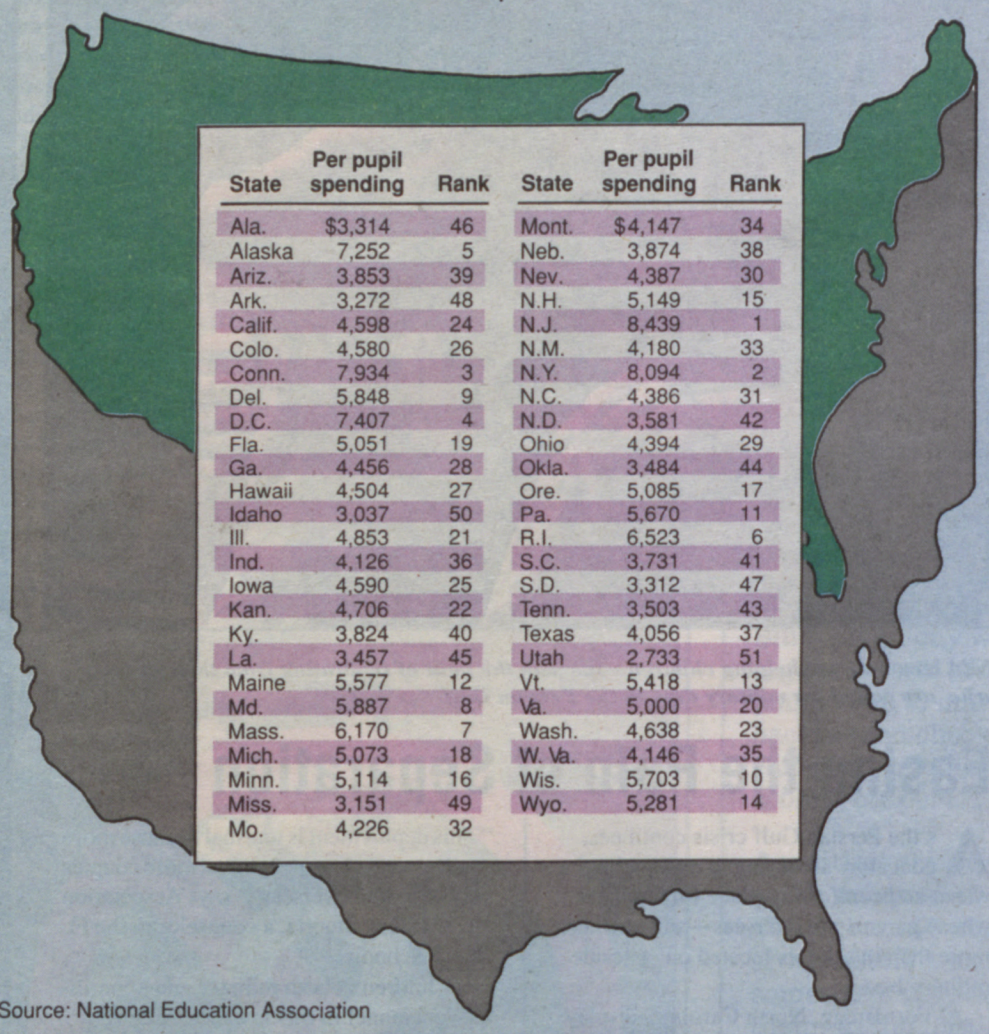
► Revamped attendance policies that hold both students and parents responsible for absenteeism and limit the number of hours students can work.

► School-based daycare. WEAC is now working with state legislators to draft and introduce a bill based on the report's recommendations.

SCHOOL FINANCE

States Spend $4,890 per Student on Schools

Latest figures from NEA Research show that in the 1989-90 school year states spent about $4,900 per pupil. That final figure is up from the previous year's average of slightly more than $4,600 per student. The NEA report, *Rankings of the States, 1990*, also shows that 19 states spent more than the national average.



State	Per pupil spending	Rank	State	Per pupil spending	Rank
Ala.	$3,314	46	Mont.	$4,147	34
Alaska	7,252	5	Neb.	3,874	38
Ariz.	3,853	39	Nev.	4,387	30
Ark.	3,272	48	N.H.	5,149	15
Calif.	4,598	24	N.J.	8,439	1
Colo.	4,580	26	N.M.	4,180	33
Conn.	7,934	3	N.Y.	8,094	2
Del.	5,848	9	N.C.	4,386	31
D.C.	7,407	4	N.D.	3,581	42
Fla.	5,051	19	Ohio	4,394	29
Ga.	4,456	28	Okla.	3,484	44
Hawaii	4,504	27	Ore.	5,085	17
Idaho	3,037	50	Pa.	5,670	11
Ill.	4,853	21	R.I.	6,523	6
Ind.	4,126	36	S.C.	3,731	41
Iowa	4,590	25	S.D.	3,312	47
Kan.	4,706	22	Tenn.	3,503	43
Ky.	3,824	40	Texas	4,056	37
La.	3,457	45	Utah	2,733	51
Maine	5,577	12	Vt.	5,418	13
Md.	5,887	8	Va.	5,000	20
Mass.	6,170	7	Wash.	4,638	23
Mich.	5,073	18	W. Va.	4,146	35
Minn.	5,114	16	Wis.	5,703	10
Miss.	3,151	49	Wyo.	5,281	14
Mo.	4,226	32			

Source: National Education Association

VERMONT

Timely Tips From New England

Vermont-NEA has filled over 1,000 requests from 50 states, Germany, and the Department of Education for its brochures on how parents and teachers can help kids learn at home.

"Answers for Parents: How To Create an Atmosphere for Learning at Home" and "Advice for Teachers: How To Help Parents Create an Atmosphere for Learning at Home" were written by the Answers Project (seven Vermont-NEA members).

Association members can get copies of the brochures by sending a self-addressed envelope with 45 cents' postage to Vermont-NEA, 10 Wheelock St., P.O. Box 567, Montpelier, VT 05602.

VIRGINIA

'Imagine If...'

The Virginia Education Association is offering a variety of new publications and print materials to help members, parents, administrators, and community leaders demonstrate their commitment to public schools. Each piece in the campaign begins with the words, "Imagine if..."

A colorful wall calendar for members' classrooms or work stations depicts a sky full of open doors, each one offering a tip for students: "Imagine if you set your sights a little higher...Imagine if you looked for a new idea every day."

A community newsletter, which local Associations can adapt for their own use, explains how parents and other citizens can help students learn. The newsletter also describes the realities of a school dropout and how these affect the dropout's family.

A brochure suggests ways parents can encourage students to set their sights high.

Radio and television spots support VEA's print campaign.

CALIFORNIA

Governor Slashes Education Budget

When California voters approved Proposition 98 in 1988, K-14 education was assured at least 40 percent of the state's general fund budget. Proposition 111, passed by voters last June, strengthens that guarantee.

But as we go to press, Governor George Deukmejian has ignored both laws and cut education programs by $462 million, including $425 million from funds protected by Proposition 98.

Among the programs cut are Indian Education Centers, dropout recovery, home-school transportation, and desegregation projects in several large districts.

The California Teachers Association, already part of the California Education Coalition of education interest groups, is fighting the cuts.

CTA President Ed Foglia labels Deukmejian's cuts "vindictive and mean-spirited," noting that Proposition 98 ensures that the money taken away from education can't be used anywhere else.

"The only fiscal effect of Deukmejian's vetoes is to deprive schools, students, and teachers," he says.

KANSAS

Member Candidates For House Set Record

A record 11 Association members are among 13 teacher candidates for the Kansas House of Representatives running with K-NEA endorsement this year.

Seven of the teacher candidates are incumbents; six are challengers or are running for open seats.

"Our members recognize the vital role the state legislature plays in the future of public education," notes K-NEA President Chuck Tilman. "The voice of education needs to be heard in the halls of the State House, and we're focusing on getting these people elected."

Meet:

Antonia Hernandez

On the Front Lines: Classroom to Courtroom

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) has changed a lot of lives in its 22 years of operation. MALDEF-backed civil rights cases have established new procedures for electing officials, hiring employees, and educating children. MALDEF also uses community education and research in its battle for the civil rights of our nation's 16 million Hispanics.

NEA Today ***staff writer Diane Dismuke recently interviewed MALDEF president and general counsel Antonia Hernandez in her Los Angeles office.***

Just what issues do you take on?
MALDEF's founders set out to correct inequities in public education, employment opportunity, and political empowerment. We've added immigrant rights, leadership development, and language.

What are MALDEF's concerns about public education?
The greatest is resource allocation—especially tuition vouchers. Having parents choose which school to send their kids to sounds wonderful, but to us it means less support for public education.

We're also concerned with teaching force composition and competency and with curriculum. How are Hispanics being portrayed to the community? How are teachers dealing with students? A significant number of Latino students don't speak English. What type of education are they getting?

Two other things that trouble us are school overcrowding and inadequate buildings. Here in Los Angeles, for instance, students attend school year-round. How can children learn in a school where temperatures go above 100 degrees—especially when they're 35 to a room?

What have been the key issues in MALDEF's education cases?
The biggest cases have involved access to public education, funding, segregation, bilingual education, and teacher equity.

In *San Antonio* v. *Rodriguez*, the Texas supreme court ruled that undocumented immigrant children can't be denied an education. In *Edgewood* v. *Kirby*, the same court has just found the state's school finance system unconstitutional because of inequitable funding. Another case—*Keyes* v. *School District No. 1*—involves segregation, bilingual education, and teacher equity in Denver.

How do your own experiences relate to the issues you work on at MALDEF?
When I was eight, my family came to Los Angeles from Mexico. Because of experiences I had then, bilingualism is especially important to me.

Sometimes people say, "You made it—so what's the problem?" But we have to measure success by the majority, not the exceptions. I made it in spite of many obstacles—and I was very fortunate.

My aunt was a principal, other relatives were teachers. I was in first grade when I was four. When I came to this country, I knew how to read and write. I knew math—a universal language.

But I didn't understand English. I remember sitting in class like a vegetable, a nonentity. I never want another kid to go through what I did.

Did teachers speak Spanish to you?
No. And one experience left me with mixed emotions: I was lucky enough to have a fourth grade teacher who'd stay after school to teach me. When I did well, she'd tell me, "You're not like *them*. You're different."

Them were the other Hispanic kids. I couldn't understand why they were different. But I was blessed by her prejudice, because she saw something in me and spent extra time with me.

Originally, you planned to be a teacher. What changed your mind?
I wanted to teach so I could help Hispanic students like myself. In fact, I actually did teach English as a Second Language in an elementary school while I was at UCLA. While in law school I taught ESL again, in adult education. But I decided I could help kids more as an attorney working to change the school system through the courts.

The event that clarified things for me occurred while I was teaching with the Upward Bound project at UCLA in February 1971. High school students in LA's Hispanic neighborhoods had walked out of their classrooms to protest unfair conditions. Many were arrested, leaving my Saturday classes empty.

I said to myself, "That's it. I'm going to law school." I walked across the campus and applied, and by September I was in law school.

As a member of the Action Council on Minority Education, you helped compile the report *Education that Works: An Action Plan for the Education of Minorities*, which calls for massive school restructuring. Why is restructuring so important?
Basically, restructuring is a healthy reassessment of public education. I believe the system we have now was developed for a different America—one that didn't need literate workers who could meet complex problems with higher-order thinking. Years ago, if you didn't graduate from high school, you could still earn a decent living. That's no longer so.

No longer are we agrarian. No longer are we industrial. No longer are we predominately from Northern European roots. Our schools are teaching different kids. We've got to restructure our system to meet our present and future needs.

How can we do that?
First, the curriculum should accurately reflect the contributions of Hispanics to our country's history. This would reaffirm to Hispanic children who they are, which is very important.

We also need to rethink when best to start teaching science, math, and literature. And I think we're going to have to have more hours and days of teaching.

We need to value teachers more, to see them as professionals and acknowledge their contributions. We need to encourage people from all sectors of society to go into teaching so students will see it as a noble profession. Finally, as a society, we need to spend a lot more money.

What about the role of parents?
Parents play a critical role in education, but Hispanic parents need to learn how to participate. Immigrants have the perception that you don't question teachers.

MALDEF runs a course where we take parents into a school and show them how to get involved in their children's education—where the money comes from, how to get involved in the PTA, and how to influence the school board.

How can non-Hispanic teachers help Hispanic students?
I look forward to the day when we attract teachers who reflect the ethnic diversity of the student population. But I urge teachers who are "noncolor" to rise above the frustrations—lack of resources, lack of money, too many children, the bureaucracy—and honestly reassess how they view and deal with students.

I'd ask them: How do you react to a child? Do you value and nurture the fact that a child speaks another language? Or do you ostracize or ignore that child? Do you reason that you have to deal with the other 35, and so forget that one? If so, what are you telling that child?

Every child is capable of learning. Every single child. And there's nothing more powerful than a teacher who recognizes that truth and acts on it.

IN THE CLASSROOM . . .

Will Democracy SURVIVE?

While people in other parts of the world celebrate newly won democratic rights, in our country citizen participation—especially among young voting-age Americans—is at an all-time low. Can teachers rekindle the civic spirit in our youth?

"The election doesn't affect me."

"It's more likely that I'll die on the way to the polls than that my vote will count."

"If I have the right to vote, I have the right **not** to vote."

Those are high school juniors and seniors—our future—talking. They're part of a social studies classroom discussion in Austin, Texas. But their comments could just as easily have come from teens in any other city.

When it comes to voting—any kind of citizen participation, for that matter—most of our youth are turned off.

Americans, overall, have a poor voting record—typically 36 to 50 percent, according to the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate.

But for 18- to 24-year-olds, the figures are even worse. Their 17-to 29-percent participation rate is the lowest of any voting bloc. In fact, in the 18 years that 18-year-olds have had the right to vote, the rate of voter participation in that youngest group steadily downward. (See chart on next page).

A recent study—*Democracy's Next Generation: A Study of Youth and Teachers*—by People for the American Way, a nonpartisan constitutional liberties organization supported by NEA, delves into the problem. Based on telephone surveys of over 1,000 youth aged 15 to 24, one-on-one interviews with 100 more in the same age category, telephone surveys with over 400 social studies teachers, and focus group interviews with teachers in Rhode Island and Kansas, the researchers found that—

► Young people cherish America's freedoms, but they don't understand what it takes to preserve them.

► This generation is—by its own admission and in the eyes of teachers—markedly less involved and less interested in public life than previous generations.

► Both young people and teachers believe family, school, and government—institutions with the best opportunity to teach citizenship—have let young people down.

► Young people themselves point the way out of our citizenship crises by asking for more ways to get involved.

Teachers who took part in the study say that administrators, school boards, and even textbook authors don't care as much as teachers do about imparting a knowledge of citizenship and encouraging student involvement in public life.

The teachers also say the social studies curriculums in their schools are less successful at encouraging citizenship than at developing an interest in current events and teaching the facts and principles of American democracy.

Smiley Poole

Austin, Texas, teacher Norma Silva tries to transfer her own sense of civic pride to her students at Lyndon Johnson High.

Instilling a sense of civic responsibility in students is a challenge for any teacher. At Lyndon B. Johnson High in Austin, Norma Silva brings the voting issue closer to home for her social studies students by comparing voting in a municipal, state, or national election to casting a ballot for class officers. But some kids say they don't vote in school elections, either.

Silva tells them she can't understand why. "You wouldn't want someone dishonest to represent you, would you?" she asks.

Silva tries to transfer her own civic enthusiasm to her students. She talks about how she was a college student living away from home when the voting age was lowered to 18. "I was so excited," she explains. "I hurried to find out how to get an absentee ballot and mail it in."

Voter registration in Texas is much easier for Silva's 18-year-olds: It's

Being Part of the Solution

This November 1, millions of elementary and high school students and their parents will cast ballots for congressional representatives and senators, governors, some local candidates, and propositions on five social issues.

They'll be voting in the National Student/Parent Mock Election, now several years old, organized by the nonprofit National Student/Parent Mock Election Corporation, with the assistance of *Time* magazine, NEA and other organizations.

Guided by the theme "We the People: The Personal Responsibility by which Democracy Lives," the Mock Election strives to defeat the feeling of powerlessness that keeps people from going to the polls.

. . . FIGHTING CIVIC APATHY

I VE?

Smiley Poole

Austin, Texas, teacher Bob Franzetti distributes voter registration cards to his Crockett High School students.

merely a matter of filling out a card and dropping it in a mailbox. The cards are available right at school—from any principal and many teachers.

At Austin's David Crockett High School, social studies teacher Robert Franzetti, a voter registrar, distributes the cards to eligible student voters during class and even turns them in for the students.

Students in social studies classes that include units on voting and political campaigning, Franzetti believes, may be more interested in voting than other students.

Franzetti's and Silva's students have been following the Texas gubernatorial contest between Texas State Treasurer Ann Richards and businessperson Clayton Williams. This campaign is one of the nastiest in recent American political history. Like so many campaigns, the Richards-Williams race has concentrated more on personal issues—like alcoholism and whorehouse patronage—than on political ones.

But at school the kids are learning about the real political issues—taxes, education, abortion, drugs, crime/violence, prisons, and the environment—and how they affect everyone.

They're analyzing material distributed by campaign committees. One candidate stresses the visual, sending out colorful, glossy photos, while the other sends only small black and white head shots, but pages and pages of proposed solutions to public problems.

Still, this gubernatorial campaign has turned off many of the kids. Others are having a difficult time deciding whom to believe.

Says one senior: "The campaign shows how immature both candidates are. I don't want either one in office, so I probably won't vote."

Franzetti counters such comments by pointing out that if you don't like either candidate, you can demonstrate your feelings by writing in the name of any person you want or by voting for an independent or small-party candidate.

He explains to his students that many young voters don't think elections directly affect them, but they do. A new school attendance law, speed limits on highways, our involvement in the Middle East—all these issues were decided by elected officials.

Franzetti also explains that many nonvoters have low self-esteem: They feel their vote won't count because they feel *they* don't count. He takes every opportunity to boost his students' feelings of self-esteem, to let them know their opinions do matter.

And this approach appears to be working. Now that they're aware of what's at stake, students in Franzetti's and Silva's classes express concern about nonvoters, particularly in their age group, and suggest ways to get more young people to the polls. A sampling of their ideas—

- ► TV and radio stations should play raps about the benefits of voting.
- ► The government should sponsor a voting campaign, perhaps playing up the theme that young people often want to change things and voting is one way they can do it.
- ► The two major candidates should tolerate each other for long enough to make commercials urging everyone to vote.
- ► Candidates should be realistic about what they can do if elected. And they should talk about their own records, not their opponents' mistakes.
- ► Producers of TV shows should use their influence over young people to stimulate voting. Make voting an "in" thing to do. Have a sitcom character go out to vote.

The students' suggestions are in sync with those of a two-year study on the role of citizens, candidates, and the media in the 1988 Presidential election, sponsored by the Markle Foundation, a charitable organization devoted to the study of mass communications in democracy.

The Markle study concludes that voter ignorance and low election turnout threaten the American democratic process and that the media and candidates have failed to live up to their responsibilities in building an informed and involved electorate.

The study suggests a nationwide advertising campaign to rekindle Americans' pride in democracy and participation in the democratic process. In particular, it calls upon the FCC to ask networks to provide free airtime to educate the electorate and to institutionalize candidate participation in debates.

"It all boils down to making people aware of the importance of good citizenship," says Silva. "We shouldn't assume that kids know these things. We have to discuss the issues with them and to emphasize that democracy is a right not to be taken for granted. And we have to be positive role models."

But teachers alone can't solve the problem. Parents, businesses, civic groups, and educators must work together to increase the number of voters in all categories and age groups.

If the situation isn't reversed, one of these days we'll have a government "by accident," a government not of the many but of the few.

—Diane Dismuke

Each participant votes on the basis of research, active participation in local campaigns, and discussions among family and friends. After schools or districts count the votes, they call in the results to state headquarters, which in turn calls national headquarters.

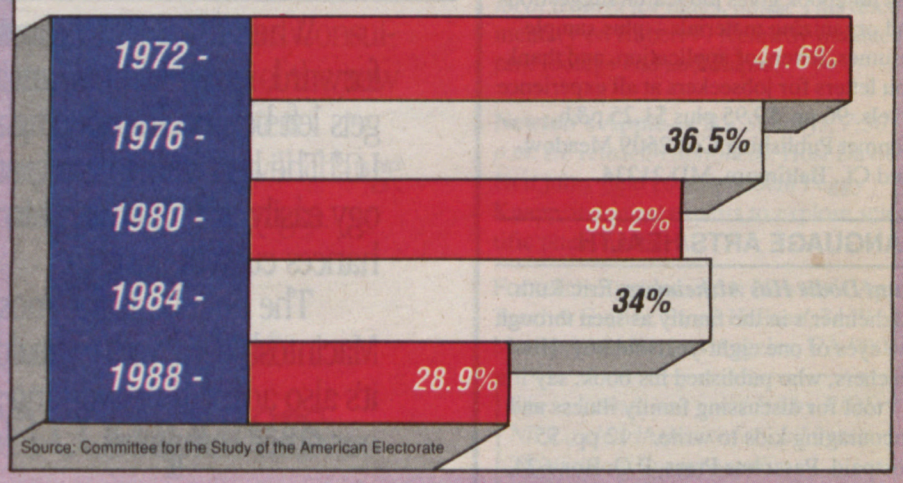
Local and national press and TV will cover each state's major events. Cable Network News (CNN) will provide national coverage on election night. Locally, there'll be banquets, potluck dinners, and parties for parents and kids.

This year, the Mock Elections in Texas and Montana are being run by NEA affiliates. Norma Silva, immediate past president of the Austin Association of Teachers, is coordinator in the Lone Star State. In Montana, Nancy Robbins of the Montana Education Association staff is in charge.

For more information, contact Gloria Kirschner, President, National Student/Parent Mock Election, 225 W. Oro Valley Dr., Tucson, AZ 85737.

Sitting Out the Elections

(Percentage of 18-24-year-olds voting in Presidential elections)



Source: Committee for the Study of the American Electorate

RESOURCES

Free or Inexpensive

LITERATURE

The Heart of Darkness (Conrad), ***The Red Badge of Courage*** (Crane), ***The Call of the Wild*** (London), ***Bartleby*** and ***Benito Cereno*** (Melville). These are four of the 12 titles in Dover's new Thrift Editions of unabridged classics. $1 each. From booksellers. Add $2.50 p&h per mail order (ask for free catalog). Dover Publications, 31 E. 2nd St., Mineola, NY 11501.

Rootabaga Stories: Part One. Carl Sandburg. Read these tales aloud when you want to show kids of any age a poet having fun with the American language. 176 pp. $3.95. From booksellers or by mail (add $1.50 p&h per book) from Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 800/543-1918 (ask for Operator J).

ELEMENTARY

Circus: A Teaching Unit. A fun guide to the history of the American circus, with activity suggestions and reproducibles for grades 1-6. 24 pp. $1 p&h. Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, 8607 Westwood Center Dr., Vienna, VA 22182, Att: Educational Services.

COUNSELING

Getting It Together: The Practical Job Search Guide. Glenn R. Munch. Loose-leaf notebook gives job search suggestions and organizing materials—plus sample resumes, letters of application, and thank-you letters for jobseekers at all experience levels. 96 pp. $9.95 plus $1.25 p&h. Genmet Publishing Co., 2609 Meadowland Ct., Baltimore, MD 21234.

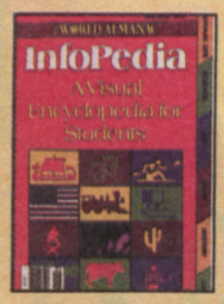
LANGUAGE ARTS/HEALTH

Aunt Dodie Has Alzheimers. Eric Ruth. Alzheimer's in the family as seen through the eyes of one eight-year-old boy. His teachers, who published his book, say it's a "tool for discussing family illness and encouraging kids to write." 12 pp. $5 postpaid. Paraclete Press, P.O. Box 624, Pentwater, MI 49449.

INDIAN EDUCATION

A History of Indian Education. Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder. ***Effective Language Education Practices and Native Language Survival.*** Edited by Jon Reyhner. About 150 pp. each. $6 each, prepaid to Eastern Montana College, Billings, MT 59101-0298, att. Jon Reyhner, Bilingual Education Program.

REFERENCE



World Almanac InfoPedia: A Visual Encyclopedia for Students. An all-round reference book with lots of graphics, aimed at students 8-16. 384 pp. $8.95. From booksellers.

PEDAGOGY

Cooperative Grouping for Interactive Learning: Students, Teachers, and Administrators. Lawrence Lyman and Harvey C. Foyle. Offers ways of immediately implementing a group instructional strategy—with examples and activities for all levels. 96 pp. Stock no. 1842-7-00-FF. $10.95. NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516.

This year, the hottest topic in the

When it comes to moving a classroom forward, it's very important that no part of it gets left behind. Introducing Apple's Macintosh® LC.* The best way to integrate new technology easily, affordably and in a way that enhances current systems.

The new LC is the most affordable color Macintosh ever. And, critical to the classroom, it's also adept at networking smoothly with all our other computers.

Which means you can easily share all the files you've built up over the years on your current Macs as well as all the files you have on your Apple® IIs. Even more important, the LC not only runs the ever growing number of innovative Mac® solutions, but also thousands of proven Apple IIe programs.**

Meanwhile, there are two other significant Apple developments to announce.

First, the Macintosh Classic,® which com-

*This device has not been approved by the Federal Communications Commission. This device is not, and may not be, offered for sale or lease, or sold or leased until approval of the FCC has been obtained. **With the addition

RESOURCES

TV Tips

David L. Wolper Presents 'The Making of the President 1964'—*Arts & Entertainment Network, Monday, November 5, 8-9 p.m. ET.* Theodore White's best-selling account of Lyndon Johnson's campaign for the presidency is translated to film.

The Walt Disney Company Presents The American Teacher Awards—*The Disney Channel, Sunday, November 4, 7-9 p.m., Wednesday, November 21, 7-9 p.m., and Saturday, December 1, 9-11 p.m. ET.* Disney honors outstanding elementary and secondary school teachers—many of them NEA members—from across the United States.

A Teacher's Story—*The Discovery Channel, Mondays, November 12-26, 9-10 p.m., repeating Fridays, 12-1 a.m., and Saturdays, 3-4 p.m. ET.* This three-part series profiles professors who have made extraordinary advances in their fields.

Language of the Antlers—*The Discovery Channel, Sunday, November 18, 10-11 p.m. ET.* This documentary offers a look at the North American moose and how it lives *(photo at left)*.

Can the Elephant Be Saved?—*PBS, Tuesday, November 20, 8-9 p.m. ET (closed-captioned).* NOVA looks at the ivory ban and other strategies to save the elephant from extinction.

After the Warming—*PBS, Wednesday, November 21, 8-10 p.m. ET.* Journalist James Burke offers a glimpse of life in the year 2050 after humanity and earth have survived global warming. A look at possible scenarios *(photo above)*.

Long Ago & Far Away—*PBS, Saturdays, November 24 and December 1, 6:30-7 p.m. ET (closed-captioned).* Nine of the best-loved *Frog and Toad* stories by Arnold Lobel come to life through the puppet animation of John Matthews.

Cousteau's Rediscovery of the World—*WTBS, Sunday, November 25, 10-11 p.m., and Monday, November 26, 12:05-1:05 a.m. ET.* Cousteau and the crew of the *Calypso* travel to the Andaman Islands, located in the western Bay of Bengal *(photo above)*.

The AIDS Quarterly—*PBS, Monday, November 26, 8-9 p.m. ET.* In recognition of World AIDS Day (December 1), this final installment of the AIDS Quarterly series takes a global look at the ever-widening epidemic.

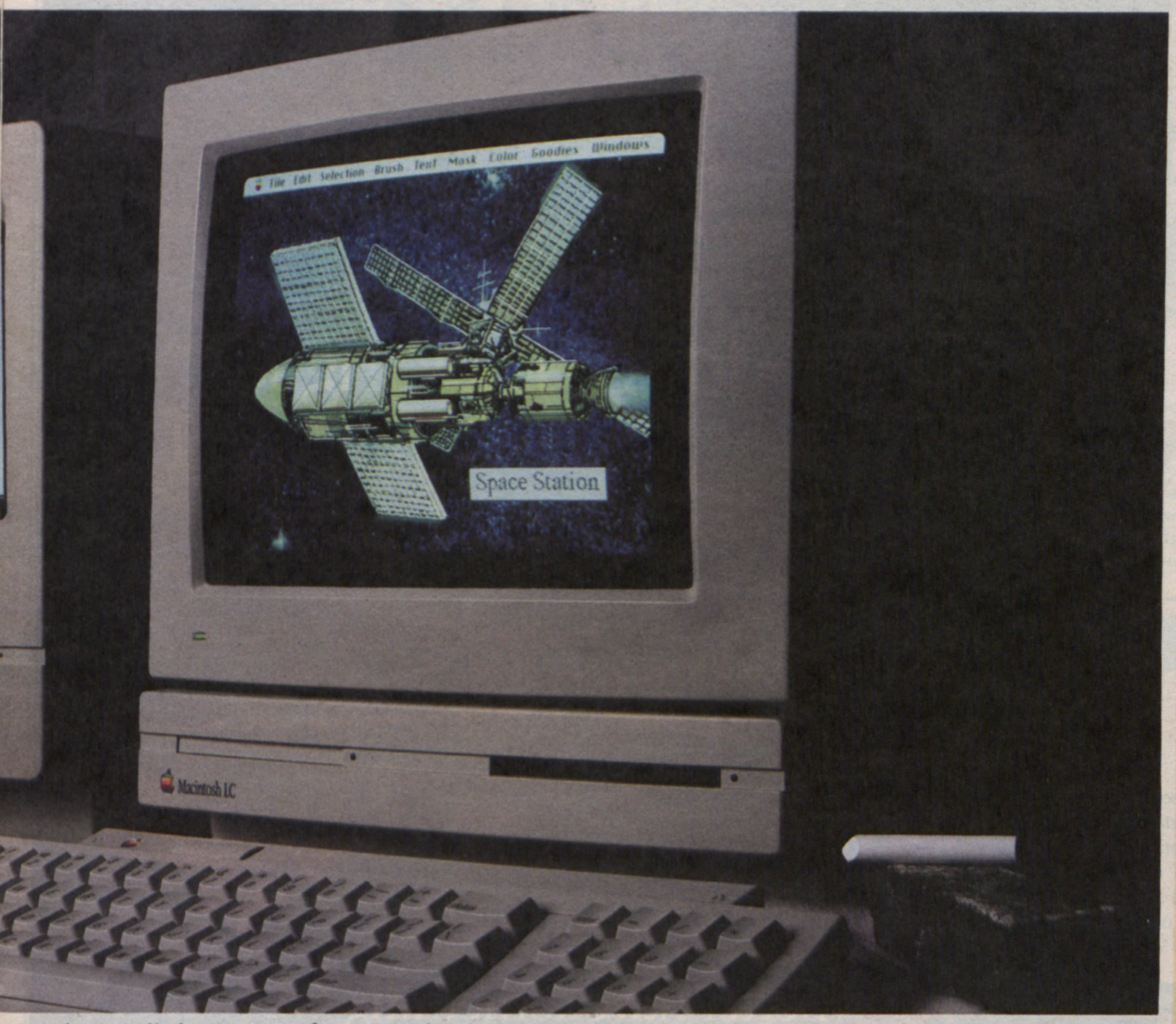
RFK: In His Own Words—*HBO, check local listings for dates, times.* This documentary on Robert F. Kennedy includes rare footage and audiotapes.

Newton's Apple—*PBS, Sundays, 7:30 p.m. ET (closed-captioned).* Host David Heil joins field correspondent Peggy Knapp and guest experts to explore scientific phenomena.

For teacher guides, write Newton's Apple Teacher Guides, Stone Halinan, 7449 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90046.

These listings are provided by KIDSNET, a clearinghouse for children's TV and radio programming.

classroom will be evolution.



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TRENDS

Study Documents Damage from Exposure to Lead

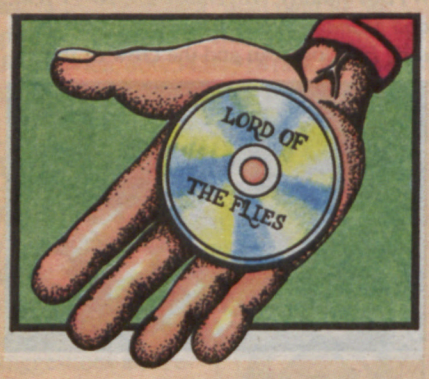
Children exposed to even low levels of lead can develop lasting nervous-system disabilities that limit them for life, according to the first longitudinal study of such youngsters.

A study of 132 19-year-olds who had tested positively for lead exposure as first and second graders found them more likely to have dropped out of school, more likely to read far below grade level, and likely to miss school more often than their classmates not exposed to lead.

The lead-exposed students also had lower scores on IQ tests and behavioral assessments than other students. The researchers, writing in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, say the effects of lead are permanent, affecting children's chances to succeed throughout life.

An NEA-backed bill (introduced by Sen. Bill Bradley of New Jersey) to restrict many commercial uses of lead has run into opposition from the Bush Administration, which contends that the EPA is already doing enough to limit children's lead exposure.

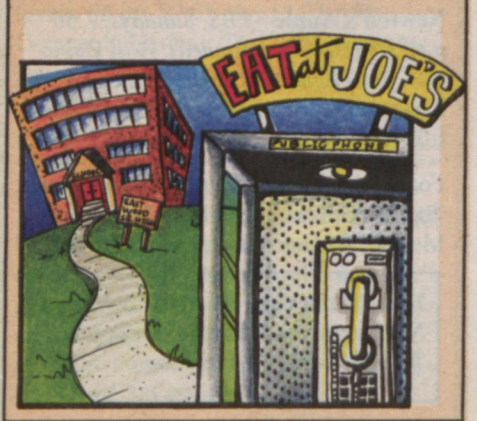
The Latest: Books On a Disk



If you want information at your fingertips, get ready for the "electronic book" system, latest technological marvel from Sony Corp.

The company has just begun marketing a palm-size audio player for listening to books recorded on a three-inch compact disk. Sony hopes people will pay to get their information anytime, in any place, instead of having to go to the library or bookshelf for it.

Big Huckster Is Watching You



The race for schoolkids' pocketbooks has a new entrant: an Atlanta company determined to market television commercials at high school pay phones. The Telephone Advertising Corporation is pushing video kiosks that will play a 2.5-minute continuous loop of 15-second ads on screens above the phones.

TAC's plan to install its invention in Atlanta schools last year was scuttled by a school board veto. Company officials now say they'll do business with any school system that's interested. And why would a school system be interested? TAC promises to share the ad income.

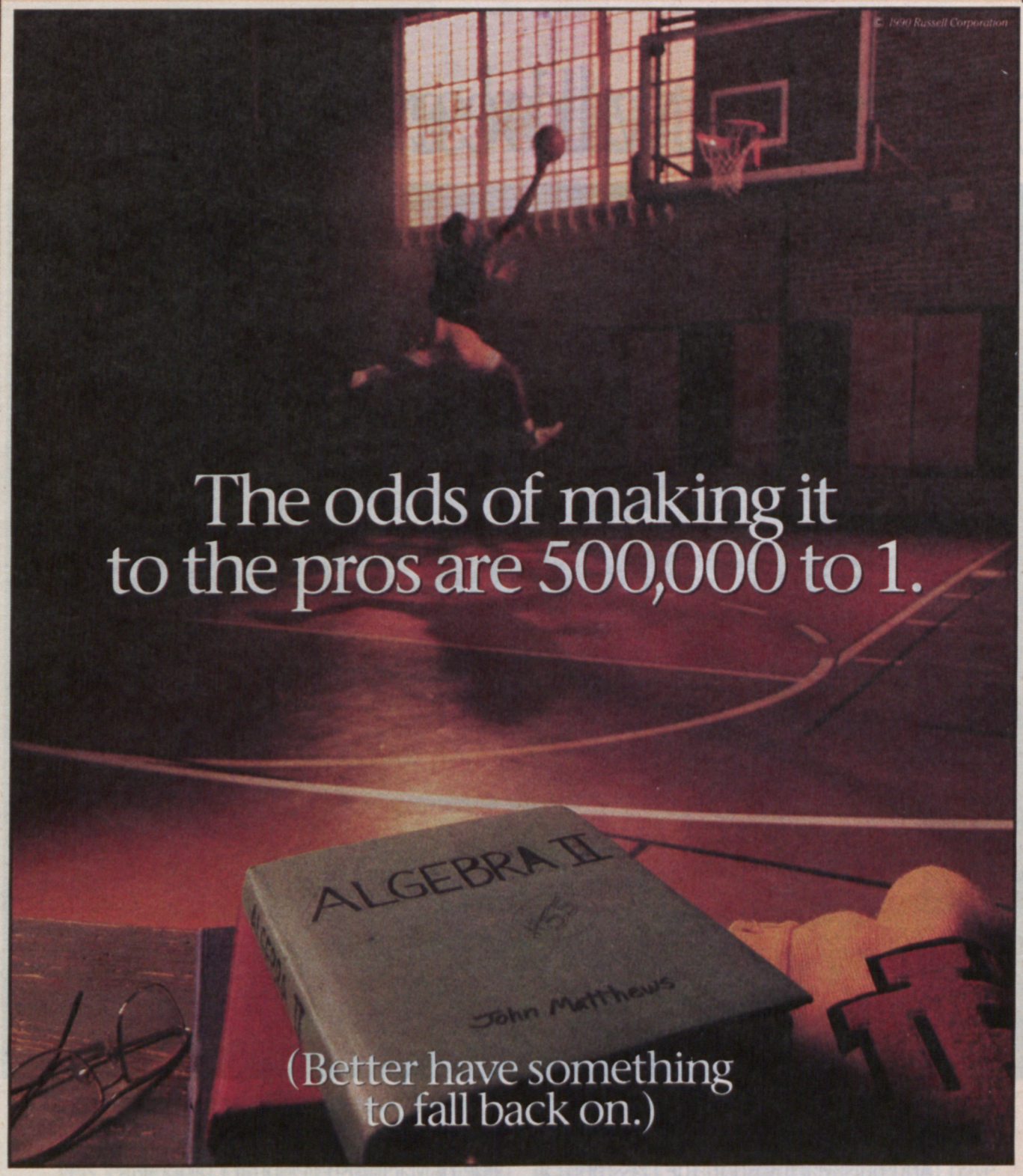
Dropout Rate Drops For Blacks

Blacks were much less likely to drop out of school in 1988 than a decade earlier, says the Census Bureau.

A recent report shows that during the 1978-88 period the annual dropout rate for Black high school students declined from 9.6 percent to 6.3 percent.

But while Blacks are now more likely than before to finish high school, they're less likely to go on to higher education. The proportion of Black high school graduates enrolling in college has fallen from 30 to 28 percent.

Hispanic students' annual dropout rate seems stuck at about 11 percent, still about twice that of other ethnic groups.



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Innovation

How NEA members are changing the way schools work

In Arizona

How To Get a Wall When You Want One

Someone there is who'd really love a wall, and it's probably a teacher—or aide—in an open classroom school. But try to get that wall put up, and you'll see how much power an instructional staff has.

For 15 years, the teachers and aides at Colonel Smith Middle School in Fort Huachuca, Arizona, routinely complained about their backless classrooms, built in fours around open spaces through which sound reverberated from one classroom to another.

"To schedule a noisy event like a debate between Yanks and rebels," says seventh grade U.S. history teacher Diane Dudzik, "you had to clear it with three other teachers."

Now the Colonel Smith staff have their walls. "We got them because we stopped being 'input' people, and became 'decision' people," explains Dudzik.

What happened was that the Colonel Smith staff voted to have an NEA TABS (Teams Approach to Better Schools) team at precisely the same time that the Fort Huachuca district had to decide how to spend $237,000 in capital levy funds the state had just released.

The Fort Huachuca central office really wanted staff involvement in the decisions about how to spend the windfall. For the first time, teachers were named to the district's budget committee. And the district supported the Colonel Smith TABS team.

So it happened that in fall 1989, the first decision facing the Colonel Smith TABS team was how to spend the school's share of the $237,000.

"The administrators were thinking high-tech equipment," says Dudzik, the TABS team's first chair, "but the staff were thinking walls. Other years—when we had 'input'—people had listed 'walls' as an individual priority for action. But this time we wanted to take the walls issue as a group decision—more important, we thought, than laser disks—to the districtwide budget committee."

The Colonel Smith TABS team got their request, and "because the walls weren't as expensive as past administrators had said they were," Dudzik explains, "we got some of the high-tech stuff too."

Walls of course were never the real issue at Fort Huachuca. The real issue is setting in place a mechanism for allowing staff to do what needs to be done so students can learn. Like obtaining quiet classrooms.

And a TABS team is such a mechanism. "It's a way to do what teachers said all along," says Dudzik, "to keep people who've lost touch with what's going on in the classroom from making decisions about what happens in the classroom."

—Nancy R. Needham

Edward McCain

Up against a wall is just where TABS team members (this year's and last year's) at Colonel Smith School, Fort Huachuca, Arizona, want to be. Front row, from left, are Dee Stone, Chuck Olson, Anita Cooper, Lee Clifton, Joyce Bridges (1990 chair), Ben Rutherford, and Larrie Whitney. Back row, from left, Diane Dudzik (1989 chair), Barb Ammon, Phyllis Lowery, and Sue Sword. Stone and Lowery represent support staff, Rutherford is principal and the rest are teachers or counselors.

In Tennessee

Middle Schools Go High Tech

Instructors at Nashville's John Trotwood Moore Middle School and Dupont Hadley Middle School have traded in their industrial arts lab for a new modular "Introduction to Technology" program. In the process they've updated the curriculum and equipment to bring focus to the issue of how technology is applied in the contemporary workplace.

"We felt that the traditional industrial arts program, with its emphasis on woods and metals, was meeting the needs for a type of industry that's vanishing," said technology teacher Mike Wyss. "We wanted to start the ball rolling for students to think about technical careers that are in demand today."

At the heart of the program is the modular lab facility. The former shops were divided into 16 modules or learning areas of about 80 square feet apiece. Each of the modules represents a specific area of technology, such as aerospace or computer-aided design. Students are introduced to robotics, lasers, pneumatics, computer-controlled machining lathes, applied physics, and a host of state-of-the-art technologies.

Pairs of students work at their own pace for two weeks in each module. A call-light system signals the instructor when students need help.

"Instructors serve as a resource to students," says Dan Covington, director of vocational education with Metro Nashville Public Schools. "They go where they're needed."

Instructors Mike Wyss and Mike Barnette got the idea for the program after visiting a similar one at Pittsburg (Kansas) Middle School. Back home they immediately set out to strip their existing shops and construct the modular format. Within 90 days, they had the curriculum for the new technologies written and the program was under way at both schools.

From these two pilots, the Technology Program has expanded into 10 other Nashville middle schools. Each full program costs about $40,000.

Now three high schools have adopted the concept, and four universities in Tennessee are using the ideas in their curriculum. The state Department of Education has adopted the program as a model.

—Vicky Lytle

Tennessee Teacher

Students learn radio broadcasting in the audio/video module, one of 16 modules that are part of a new technology program being used in several Nashville, Tennessee, schools.

People

Jon Reynolds

Teaching Art in a Big Way

Recently students at Broadmoor Middle Laboratory School in Shreveport, Louisiana, have been found painting on the school walls. But these perpetrators aren't young vandals—they're students of art teacher **Nancy Reynolds**, decorating their school's cafeteria with a mural.

Entitled "Life in Louisiana" and painted mainly in Mardi Gras colors like purple, green, and gold, the students' work extends the length of one cafeteria wall. "I wanted my students to be able to show off their talents in a big way," says Reynolds. "The project also fosters their pride and awareness of the state—and it ties in with the study of Louisiana history that's required in the eighth grade."

When she's not overseeing the young artists' works in progress, Reynolds can be found serving as curator of student art shows at a local gallery or teaching art at Centenary College.

Joe Di Dio

A Major League Musician Plays the Association's Tunes

For **Jodi Austin**, the organist for this year's NEA Representative Assembly in Kansas City, playing for large gatherings is nothing new. Austin is now in her third season as the organist for the Kansas City Royals baseball team.

An NEA Student Program member, Austin was referred to RA organizers by NEA Host Committee volunteers who taught her as a high school student in nearby Independence, Missouri. Austin is a junior at the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

"It's very exciting to be a part of the RA," says Austin, who played state songs and special requests from delegates. "It makes me proud to be an NEA member."

When Austin completes her studies she plans to return to Independence, this time as an NEA teacher-member.

NEA Members: Miss Idaho, Miss Alaska

This September brought big change into the lives of Association members **Kendra Lee Ruwe** and **Holly Salo**. Instead of walking school corridors, they were walking a runway in Atlantic City, New Jersey, to compete for the Miss America title—Ruwe as Miss Idaho and Salo as Miss Alaska.

Although neither was among the 10 final contenders, Ruwe's fiddle playing won her a $3,500 scholarship in the talent competition. That award plus her state winnings of $1,500 will pay for study at the College of Idaho in Caldwell for a master's degree in counseling. Ruwe already has a master's in instructional technology.

Last year, Ruwe taught speech and drama at Caldwell's Jefferson Junior High and was Idaho's Beginning Teacher of the Year. She says, "My classroom experience has taught me that not everyone can be all they want to be, but they can always be more than they are."

Parker Portraits

Kendra Lee Ruwe

Salo, who last year taught English at Nikiski Junior-Senior High on the Kenai Peninsula, will use the four-year scholarship that came with her state title to study creative writing as a graduate student at the University of Alaska, Anchorage.

Both women come from education families. Salo's mother, Judy, is a teacher, a member of the NEA Board of Directors, an Alaska state legislator, and immediate past president of NEA-Alaska, while her father, Robb, is a recently retired school administrator.

Ben Swan

Holly Salo

Ruwe's mother, Janet, and sisters Donelle and Kiley also teach. Several years ago the Ruwe family—including father Lee and Kendra's three brothers—was featured in an *NEA Today* article when they won national recognition for their playing of Dixieland, folk music, and old-time fiddle tunes.

Salo puts her feelings on winning the Miss Alaska title in perspective: "The pageant isn't my life. Rather, I think what I do with my life is why I won the pageant."

Gary Emeigh

Of Heroes and Heritage

There was a time, says **Shirley Stewart**, when the Black kids who made up the majority of the students at Frankford Elementary School didn't want to hear about being Black.

"They had so little self-esteem that they assumed what they'd hear was negative," recalls Stewart, a fifth grade teacher at the small, rural school in southern Delaware. "What these students needed was knowledge: about their history, their culture, their heroes."

In 1985, Stewart and her colleagues created the Afro-American Bowl, a contest in which students present skits portraying famous Afro-Americans and the other students identify them. Today, the program is a school institution: students from all grades and all classes watch representatives from grades 4-6 compete. Though the assembly is held in February as an observance of Black History month, students start early in fall to learn about their characters.

Frankford teachers, too, have learned from the contest. "We put together a Black History notebook for the entire staff, complete with worksheets," says Stewart, who teaches a course in Black history at the Delaware Teachers' Center. "It gives backgrounds on famous Black Delawareans as well as national figures."

"Marcus Garvey once said, 'A people without knowledge about their history is like a tree without roots,'" Stewart sums up. "That's how these students were. Now they have a foundation, a rich heritage to help them stand tall."

Edward McCain

15 Minutes Can Make a Difference

At Utterback Middle School in Tucson, Arizona, **Mellanay Auman** figured 15 minutes a day of "home base" (a variant of home room) was enough time for her seventh graders to do something for others. "I thought the kids could do better than just chill out," she explains.

Auman mulled over possible projects with colleague **Jeanne Struck**. "When Jeanne said she had an old sewing machine," Auman recalls, "we began to think quilts.

"We put some proposals to both our home bases, and the kids voted to use their spare time in school to make quilts for the homeless."

Last school year the 40 students in the two home bases produced 35 quilts. One was raffled off, raising $400 to benefit the school's science Olympics team. Auman sent another to the late Mitch Snyder, advocate for the homeless.

"Boys and girls alike enjoyed the project," notes Auman.

Palm Berry

Musician's Leap: Stage to School

In the summer of 1988 **Jose Gonzalez** was at the top of the classical/folk music profession in his native Puerto Rico, playing with Puerto Rico's most popular artists and its symphony orchestra. Performing on the guitar-like cuatro, the national instrument, he sold out concerts and recordings. But that fall he left Puerto Rico—to become an elementary school music teacher in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

Why did Gonzalez turn his back on a life of commercial success?

"It was time to take a step forward," he explains, "to stretch my creativity."

Today Gonzalez does a lot of performing —from Bach to rock, and a blend of Latin styles—and a lot of creating, too. This year he produced a tape, *Criollo Clasico*,* of his own works, as well as music by composers from Stevie Wonder to Eric Satie.

But most of Gonzalez' time is spent with the kids—many of them Hispanic—at Sullivan Elementary School, a music magnet school for fourth through sixth graders, or with teens in an after-school program.

Beyond the schools, Gonzalez wants to make a place for the cuatro in classical, jazz, and rock music.

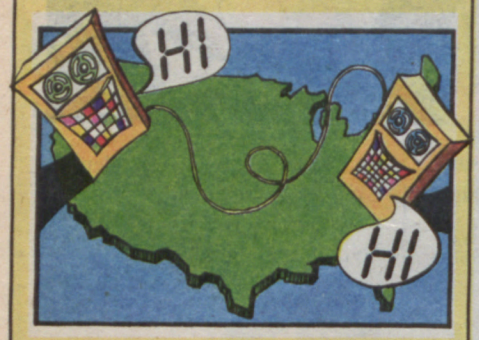
**To locate a copy, call (413)549-4415.*

IDEA EXCHANGE

Corresponding: Over Land . . .

A computer serves as a mailbox for Ron Sipe's sixth graders at Oxford Elementary School in Claremont, North Carolina. Two years ago, Sipe advertised on the National Ideas Board—an electronic bulletin board for educators—for a teacher interested in a student electronic letter exchange. Los Angeles fifth/sixth grade teacher Richard Tombs, of Latona Elementary School, responded.

Since then, the two teachers' students have been corresponding—one-on-one—by computer. They've found that their schools both have a student population of 600. But while Oxford serves a settled,



rural, predominately white population, Latona is an urban, multiethnic school where many students don't speak English. The Oxford class was fascinated by a videotape from Latona of Hispanic and Chinese neighborhood celebrations.

The letters go through the Free Education Electronic Mail Service, available to any teacher with a computer and a modem. For more information, contact Sipe at Oxford Elementary, Route 1, Claremont, NC 28610.

. . . and Sea

Second graders in Veronica Herczogh's class at Westlawn Elementary in Falls Church, Virginia, place carefully composed letters in tightly capped bottles, toss them "out to sea"—and get replies!

The project culminates a reading unit on Ann Cameron's short-story book *More Stories, Julia Tells* (Knopf, 1986). The last story—about a boy who dreams of sending letters in corked bottles to distant lands and getting wonderful replies—never fails to fascinate the kids, who inevitably want to visit the nearby Potomac River to send out their own letters.

Herczogh offers the students a more practical alternative: floating their letters in a plastic pool set up at the school entrance. A poster invites older students to take a letter if they promise to reply. Many of those responses are hand-delivered in the school cafeteria—and many of the new friendships continue.

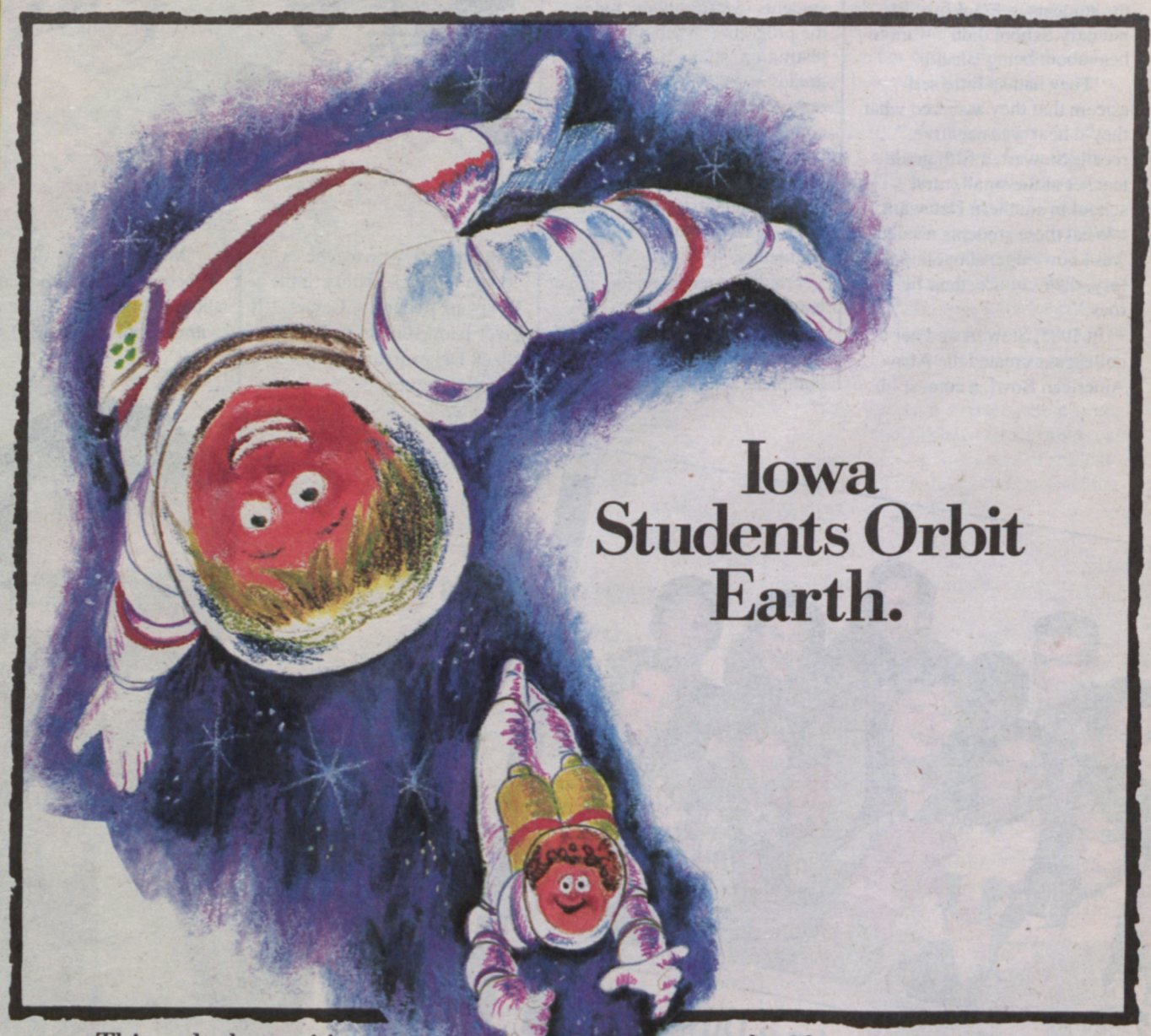
Reading: A Hard Sell

Eighth graders in Darlene Ann Rife's language arts classes "sell" their schoolmates on good books. Rife, who teaches at Jane Long Middle School in Houston, Texas, first has her students read an outstanding novel—one that's won a Newbery or Caldecott award—and complete a unit on facts, opinion, and propaganda, including techniques for analyzing TV commercials. Then each writes a one-minute video to persuade other kids to read the chosen book. Rife tapes the videos and shows them to other classes.

Dancing Across Iowa

Students at Westmer Junior High in Joy, Illinois, and Wood Junior High in Davenport, Iowa, walk, jog, swim, dance, rollerskate, and bicycle across different areas of the country—without leaving their own neighborhoods. The kids are members of Challenges Unlimited, identical clubs at each school, brainchildren of teacher-friends and mountain climbers Barbara Chiles (Westmer) and Sue Hinrichsen (Wood).

Club members keep the group's motto—"Rise Above the Ordinary"—in mind as they set nine-month physical activity goals for themselves. They keep track of their progress in log books as they accumulate mileage toward their goals.



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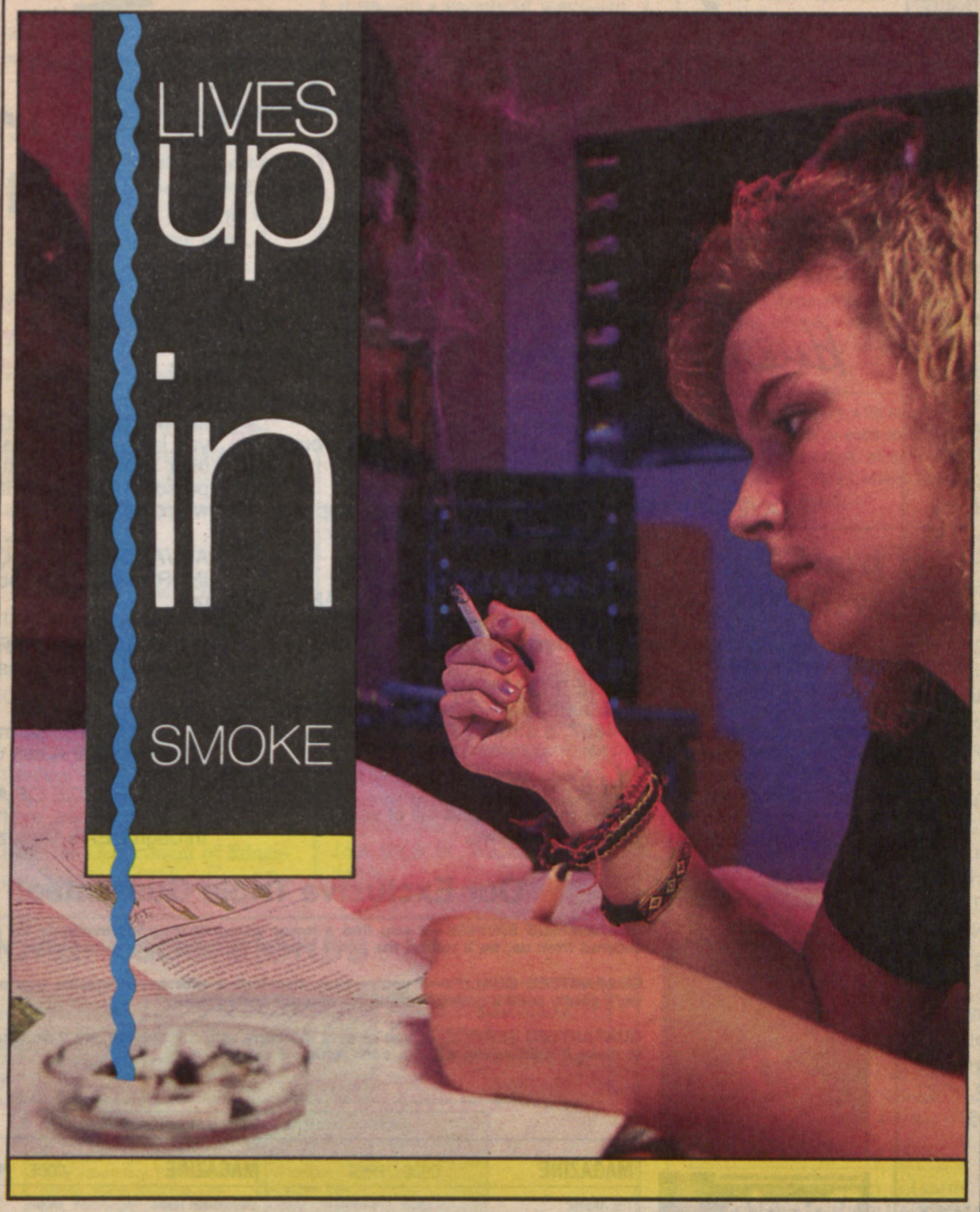
Health

Information about health factors that affect the way students learn.

Roberta Beach, M.D., is director of adolescent services at the Denver Department of Health and Hospitals. She is a clinical associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Denver, and a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on Adolescence.



Q. How many teenagers smoke today?
A. Approximately 6 million U.S. teenagers—about one of every seven—smoke. Among high school seniors, it's more than one out of five. Another 100,000 children between the ages of 10 and 13 smoke. There's been a slight decrease in the number of boys who smoke, but an increase among girls has kept the overall rate of teen smokers unchanged.

Q. Why do teenagers smoke? How do they typically start?
A. According to studies, the reasons teenagers smoke fall into three interrelated psychosocial categories: environment, personality, and behavior. The environment factor includes the household and the parents' influence on potential smoking. Children whose parents smoke are twice as likely to smoke as other kids.

The personality factor relates to whether the teen fits an unconventional profile of attitudes—for instance, challenging norms, having low self-esteem, and being rebellious.

The behavior category refers to the practice of experimenting with a variety of problem behaviors—using cigarettes as well as abusing alcohol or other drugs.

Teens usually start smoking as an experiment they undertake along with other youngsters. Slowly, they move from group use to individual use. But the strongest factor influencing an adolescent in favor of smoking is the need for social status. Smoking is a way to appear adult.

Q. In what environments (school? home?) are children most likely to pick up the smoking habit?
A. Living in a home with adult smokers is the most potent factor pressing kids to smoke. The second influence is that of schoolmates. But the media are a strong influence on adolescents, too. In a recent survey, teens said they thought—because of the media—that 80 percent of their peers smoked, when in reality, 15 percent do.

Q. Is smoking tied to socioeconomic status? And why do more girls than boys smoke?
A. Smoking is tied to socioeconomic status; the lower the status, the more likely the child is to smoke.

One of the main reasons girls are smoking more than boys appears to be the advertising images tobacco companies are using. Ads often show young, thin, attractive women smoking. Girls believe smoking will help them control their weight and will give them an aura of sophistication.

The increase in female smoking is of special concern because of the serious dangers to babies whose mothers smoke during pregnancy. Babies of mothers who smoke are often born at the low weights that could create serious problems later on—for instance, they're at a higher risk for contracting asthma, pneumonia, and other infections.

Q. Can smoking lead to drug and alcohol use?
A. Cigarettes are called "the gateway drug"—their use is a strong indicator that dangerous habits may develop later on. It's not that nicotine directly causes children to use other drugs: rather, low self-esteem and the need for social status lead to using both cigarettes and other drugs. When children smoke, they are, in effect, hoisting a red flag, signalling that they're vulnerable to peer pressure.

Q. What makes it easier for some and harder for others to quit smoking?
A. Smoking's like any other habit—the earlier you start and the longer you continue, the harder breaking the habit will be. Among adult smokers, 90 percent started smoking when they were teenagers. Remember that nicotine is an addictive chemical; it requires intense motivation to overcome an addiction once it's established.

Q. What—if anything—are cigarette manufacturers doing to stop the increase of smoking in teenagers?
A. Cigarette manufacturers claim they don't target advertising to children and adolescents, but their ads use young, attractive models and sports heroes—the role models children look up to. Cigarette ads also associate smoking with sexual attractiveness, success, friendship, and companionship.

Q. How much cancer is related to smoking?
A. If everyone in the U.S. quit smoking today, there would be 90 percent less lung cancer, 50 percent less bladder cancer, 33 percent less heart disease, 41 percent fewer childhood deaths, and 22 percent fewer low birthweight infants. The Surgeon General's 1989 report indicates that the younger people are when they start smoking, the more likely they are to die of lung cancer. People who started smoking before they were 15 have cancer rates 19 times higher than nonsmokers.

Q. Is "smokeless" (chewing) tobacco safer than cigarettes?
A. Chewing tobacco is just as dangerous as smoking cigarettes. Teens believe that as long as you don't inhale cigarette smoke, you're safe. That's a myth. Chewing tobacco has many harmful side-effects—tooth and gum destruction, for instance, and mouth cancer.

Q. How can teachers and schools help influence students not to smoke?
A. There are four ways schools can influence students not to smoke: by providing early education, by establishing themselves as tobacco-free schools, by running programs to help kids stop smoking, and by giving consistent anti-smoking messages.

Studies show that young children can be influenced to stop a bad habit when they're shown the harmful long-term effects of that habit. For teenagers, education messages are more effective if they stress immediate adverse consequences (poor athletic performance, stained teeth, stale odor).

Tobacco-free school policies have been shown to lower the number of students starting to smoke. Programs to help kids stop smoking work best if they involve the entire family. And consistent anti-smoking messages from all collective influences—the media, parents, community leaders, and teachers—will help influence children not to smoke.

TECH TALK

Mixing Tech with Ed: The Educators Tell How

It's an educator's dream: a computer on every teacher's desk and in every teacher's home; a telephone and modem in every classroom; classroom support specifically related to the uses of educational technology; and in-service training designed to develop teacher expertise in technology.

The dream is just one of the recommendations of a recent report by the International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE), a nonprofit organization of educators who use technology. *VISION: Technologically Enriched Schools of Tomorrow (TEST)*, offers recommendations to the nation's leaders.

The ISTE report urges the President to declare the '90s the "Decade of Technology in Education." It urges Congress to boost federal support of research and development in ways to apply technology in education. ISTE also proposes that a National Technology Trust Fund be established to make sure no student is denied access to technology.

Emphasizing that school systems must be redesigned to prepare students for the 21st century, *VISION* cites schools that are using technology in exemplary ways. As part of the research for the report, an ISTE team visited 45 schools that have successfully integrated technology into their curriculums and have invested heavily in teacher training. A set of videotapes describing ways these schools are using technology is available from ISTE.

The ISTE lauds the NEA EdStar Program, an affordable computer-purchase program offering specially adapted IBM and Apple computers. Details on NEA EdStar will appear in an upcoming issue of *NEA Today*.

ISTE is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the improvement of education through the use of technology. Copies of the report are available from ISTE, 1787 Agate St., Eugene, OR 97403-9905.

New McAuliffe Educators

NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) named five teachers as its 1990 Christa McAuliffe Educators earlier this year. All five are using technology as a tool for restructuring their schools. Each received a $5,000 award.

The winners are Theresa Roybal, Mission View Elementary School, Tucson, Arizona; Cyndy Everest-Bouch, Belridge School, McKittrick, California; Larry Scaletta, Thorton Township High School, Harvey, Illinois; Kathleen Duplantier, Abita Springs Elementary and Junior High Schools, Abita Springs, Louisiana; and Jo Blackwood, Capital High School, Charleston, West Virginia.

Throughout the year, the five honorees have continued their work as educational pioneers, developing new ways of using technology to improve teaching and enhance students' educational experience. This summer, they developed a week-long symposium on technology and restructuring at Stanford University in California.

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RESEARCH CLUES

Labs for Learning

When you're just about to cry "uncle," try calling Uncle Sam. Federally funded education research labs may have the answers you've been looking for.

For 12 of her 20 years in the classroom, Michele Milden taught "combination" classes—classes with students from more than one grade level. Yet she was continually searching for information on how to teach them more effectively.

Where was the research? What were other teachers' experiences? Could anyone offer solid advice?

Milden, now a third grade teacher at Long Branch Elementary in Arlington, Virginia, recently took her questions to her local and state Associations. And the Virginia Education Association took her to the Appalachia Educational Laboratory.

AEL is one of nine federally funded education research labs *(see map below)*. Their purpose: to link educational research to practice.

VEA and AEL got Milden together with five teachers who had similar questions about combination classes. The six became one of AEL's study groups—designed to investigate an educational issue, produce a publication useful to other educators, and give participants professional development experience.

"AEL's staff guided us through. They helped us put a survey together," Milden says. "They provided statistical expertise. They were supportive, professional. I don't think we could have done it without them."

In just a few months, the study group produced a final draft, "Teaching Combined Grade Classes: Real Problems and Promising Practices."

"We're proud of it," Milden says. "It's good information about how Virginia teachers handle combination classes. And it's a start for collecting national data on this issue."*

Created by the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1966, regional education labs were born of the Great Society.

Through the years, locations, names, regional borders, and funding levels have varied. (This year, the nine existing labs are getting a total of $23 million from the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement.)

But the labs' purpose remains the same. Says AEL Deputy Executive Director Jack Sanders, "Practitioners' time is extremely limited. So we try to stay on top of the latest R&D, and then pass it on—in a variety of ways—to those who need it."

"They're our regional partner," says VEA's Instruction and Professional Development Director Helen Rolfe. "They provide training, do workshops on critical issues. They're exceedingly current.

"And when someone calls to find out how to teach science using ants—something I don't have volumes on—I make heavy use of their resource library, and I encourage our members to do the same," adds Rolfe.

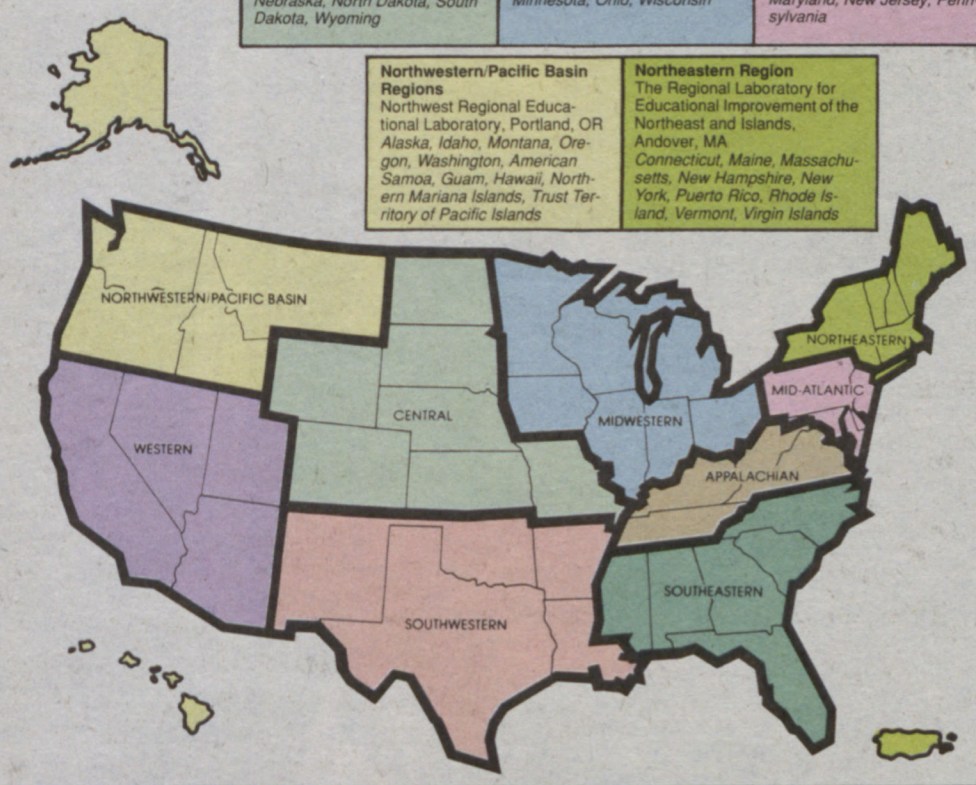
If you've got research questions, write or call your regional research lab. After all, your tax dollars should be working for you.

—*Stefanie Weiss*

**At the 1990 NEA Representative Assembly, Virginia's Michele Milden helped pass a New Business Item calling on NEA to research the educational impact of elementary combination classes. If you have experience in this area you'd like to share, write to NEA Instruction and Professional Development, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington DC 20036.*

Regional Laboratories

Source: Council for Educational Development and Research



Central Region
Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory, Aurora, CO
Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming

Midwestern Region
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, Elmhurst, IL
Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

Mid-Atlantic Region
Research for Better Schools, Philadelphia, PA
Delaware, Washington, D.C., Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania

Northwestern/Pacific Basin Regions
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, OR
Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, Northern Mariana Islands, Trust Territory of Pacific Islands

Northeastern Region
The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, Andover, MA
Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virgin Islands

Western Region
Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, San Francisco, CA
Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah

Southwestern Region
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Austin, TX
Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

Southeastern Region
Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory, Research Triangle Park, NC
Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina

Appalachian Region
Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Charleston, WV
Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia

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DATA BANK

Education on the Cheap

Education spends a lot less on either physical plant or research and development than business does, according to the Office of Technology Assessment. In capital investment per employee, percentage of revenue devoted to research and development, and average revenue per employee spent on research and development, business invests millions more than education to get a better product.

U.S. EDUCATION'S PRODUCTIVITY/ TECHNOLOGY GAP

Source: Office of Technology Assessment; *Business Week*. See L. Perelman, "Closing Education's Technology Gap," Briefing Paper No. 111 (Indianapolis: Hudson Institute, November 1989).

	EDUCATION	Average Business	High-Tech Business
Capital Investment Per Employee	$1,000	$50,000	$300,000
R&D Investment As % of Revenue	<0.1%	2%	7-20%
R&D Investment Per Employee	<$50	$5,000	$30,000-50,000

Money Talks

The best place in the U.S. to live? Depends on whom you ask. *Money* magazine (using a set of mainly economic standards) says it's Bremerton, Washington, outside Seattle. The worst: Allentown/Bethlehem, Pa.

TOP TEN
Bremerton, Wash.
Seattle
San Francisco
Tacoma, Wash.
Columbia, Mo.
Eugene, Oregon
Minneapolis
Olympia, Wash.
Sacramento
Los Angeles

Bottom Ten
Wichita, Kansas
Reading, Pa.
Sharon, Pa.
Decatur, Ill.
Binghamton, N.Y.
Waterbury, Conn.
Pawtucket, R.I
New Britain, Conn.
Fall River, Mass.
Allentown/Bethlehem, Pa.

Set Up for Failure

Research shows six major factors push kids to drop out. Here they are, along with the percentage of eighth graders who are subject to each—and so are more likely than most to fail in school and drop out.

Source: The National Education Longitudinal Study (survey of 24,600 students)

REPORT CARD

Single-parent family	22%
Family income under $15,000	21%
Often at home alone	14%
Uneducated parents	11%
Sibling who dropped out	10%
Limited English proficiency	2%
Evaluation	F

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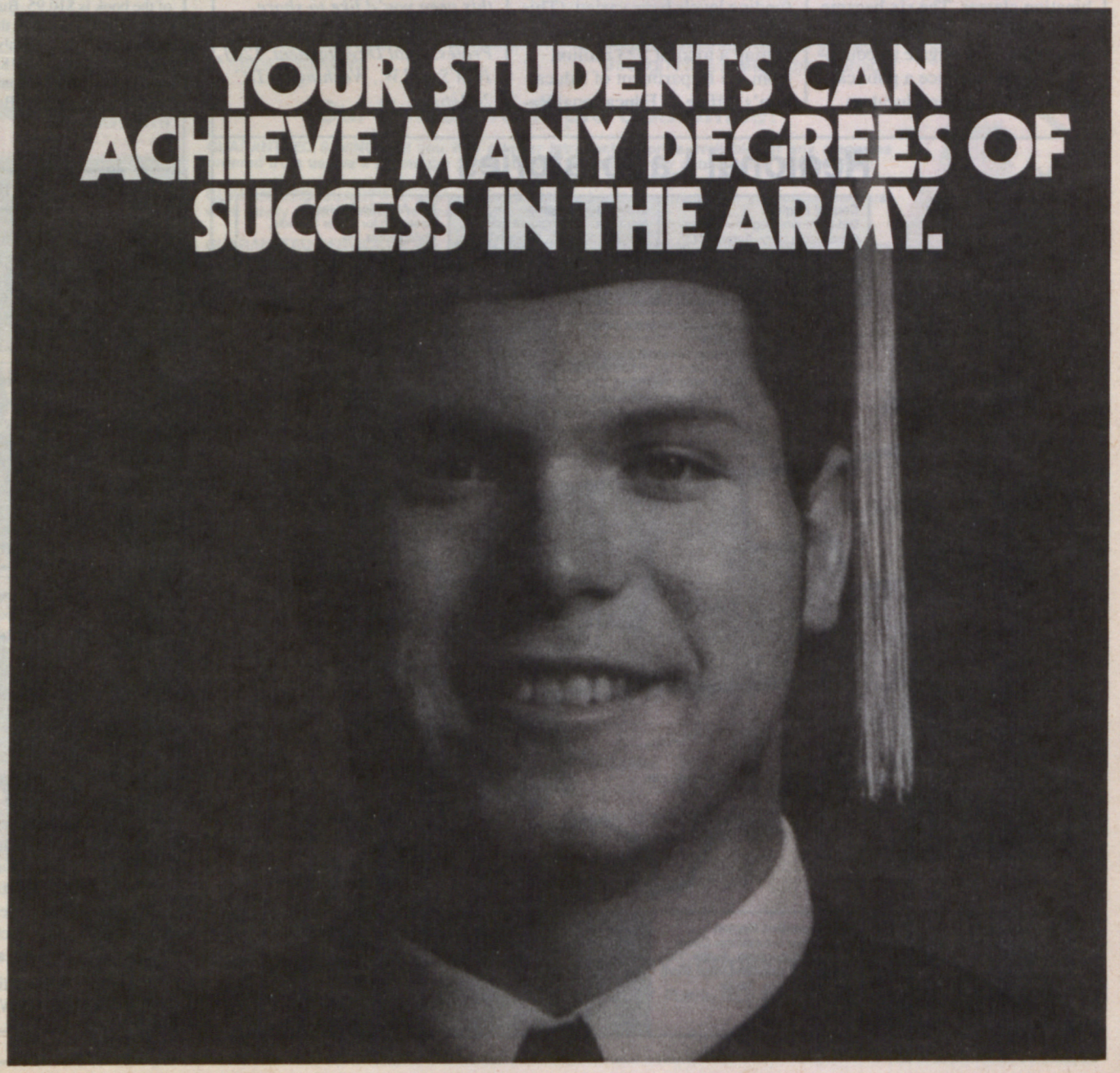

PERSONALLY SPEAKING

'SHOULD I RETIRE?'

Bob Ely's in his thirtieth year of teaching—next June he could retire. It's a pleasant thought, but would it be a smart idea?

Bob Ely is keeping an eye on a bill before the North Carolina legislature. If it becomes law, state employees eligible for early retirement will get an extra two years' credited service if they retire in the next year. That could add $1,000 a year to Bob's retirement benefits. But Bob and his wife, Carolyn, who teach in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, know they need to look carefully at all the sources of their retirement income and think about their retirement expenses before making a decision.

Bob has $35,000 in the North Carolina Teacher Retirement System. If he retires next spring, one of the first choices he must make is how he'll take this earned pension benefit.

Although the formula varies from one school district to another, North Carolina retirement benefit calculations are based on the average salary for the four years when the teacher got the highest pay—usually the last four years. The calculation includes all the money the teacher receives in a professional capacity, including longevity pay and salary supplements. To figure his benefit, Bob would add up the pay for his best four years and divide the sum by four to get an average.

To get full retirement benefits, a teacher in North Carolina must have 30 years' service or be 60 years old and have 25 years' service. The benefit is figured by multiplying the average—let's suppose in Bob's case it's $30,000—by the number of years of service, then multiplying the result by .0165. Bob's $30,000 multiplied by his 30 years' service is $900,000. Multiplied by .0165, that gives him $14,850 a year in retirement income.

Suppose Bob taught for another 10 years and brought his final average salary to $35,000. The formula would then work out to an annual benefit of $23,100.

Whenever Bob decides to retire, the first choice he'll have to make about his retirement money is whether to take the lump sum that's accumulated or receive his pension as a monthly benefit for the rest of his life.

If Bob takes the lump sum he loses both cost-of-living increases and retiree health benefits. North Carolina retirees get 80 percent of every raise working teachers get. In addition, says Margaret Foreman, research specialist for the North Carolina Association of Educators, "every year our retirees get some kind of cost-of-living increase."

Teachers who choose the monthly payments also get medical benefits for the rest of their lives. With medical costs skyrocketing, this is a very important benefit.

If Bob rules out the lump sum, several more choices will confront him: Does he want to receive income only for himself for the rest of his life? Or does he want to leave something for Carolyn—and if so, will it be an income or a lump sum?

If Bob chooses to receive a monthly income for the rest of his own life, he'll get his annual $14,850 (about $1,237.50 a month). If he chooses to provide something for Carolyn if she outlives him, they'll have to give up part of the monthly benefits because benefits will be paid as long as either of them is alive. How much they give up will depend on their life expectancies and how much Carolyn's to receive if Bob dies first.

If Carolyn is to receive 100 percent of Bob's benefit, they will give up the most in size of payments. Some alternatives: Carolyn could receive half the benefit or a lump sum payment. Another choice is a monthly payment throughout Bob's lifetime or for a "period certain," whichever is longer. For example, Bob could say he wanted the benefit to be paid for at least 10 years, even if he dies sooner.

In 10 years, when Bob turns 62, he'll start getting Social Security benefits. Meanwhile, to fill in the gap, he can take a pension option called "Social Security leveling." That would raise his pension payments until he's 62 by a specified percentage of his estimated Social Security benefit. Then, when he actually starts getting Social Security benefits, he'll "pay back" that money.

But, says NCAE's Foreman, teachers often don't understand that this option isn't like a bank loan. They don't simply repay what they've borrowed. Rather, their pension is reduced by the entire amount of their Social Security benefits every month for the rest of their lives.

Suppose Bob arranges for the pension fund to pay him the equivalent of about 40 percent of his estimated Social Security benefit for 10 years, until he's 62. When he starts actually getting Social Security benefits, his pension will be reduced—permanently—by the full amount of his Social Security benefit.

Whatever Bob might decide about Social Security leveling, retiring early—if that's what he chooses to do—will lower his eventual Social Security benefits. That's because the Social Security Administration averages out lifetime earnings when figuring a benefit, according to Social Security representative Frank Battistelli. If Bob stops working—and earning—when he's 52, he'll have 10 years of zero earnings before he's eligible for Social Security benefits. Those 10 years will drastically cut his annual earnings, averaged out over his lifetime. "The best advice I can give people in his situation," says Battistelli, "is to find out what early retirement will do to their Social Security benefits." An easy way to do that is to call 1-800-234-5772 and ask for Form SSA-7004, a Personal Earnings and Benefits Estimate request.

Bob and Carolyn also have some tax-deferred annuities and stocks. They need to figure out what to do with this money and what kind of income it might provide for their retirement.

Finally, they need to check their annual budget to see how they can make their retirement income stretch to cover their expenses. Experts say that to maintain your lifestyle after you retire, you'll need about 75 percent of the income you have while you're working.

The Elys aren't spendthrifts. But they do own part of a beach-front condo, where they plan to spend some of their time in retirement. They enjoy eating out and attending the symphony and the community theatre. Carolyn also enjoys taking a part in local politics, and both she and Bob like to travel. This year the Elys must weigh all the facts and make the critical decision: If Bob retires now, will their life after retirement be what they want?

—Mary Rowland

Bob and Carolyn Ely are weighing their retirement options.

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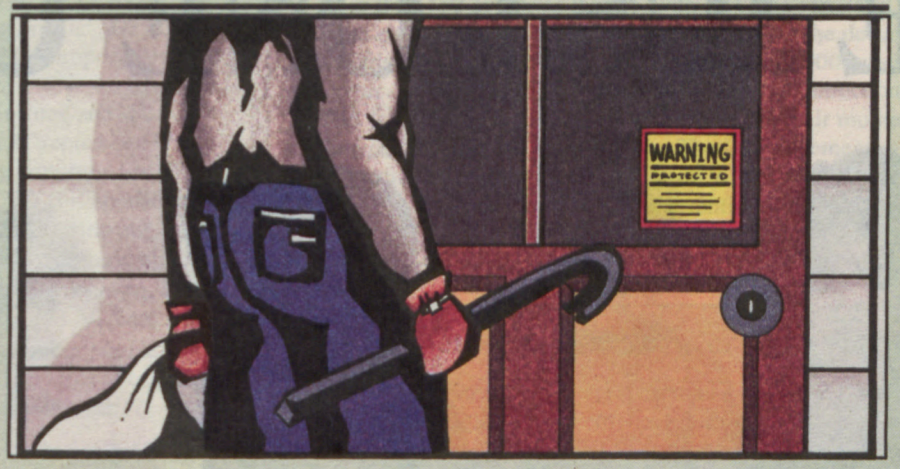
YOU AND YOUR RETIREMENT

Guarding Against Crime

The odds say you've got less than an even chance of escaping property crime during your retirement. But taking a few steps can shift those odds in your favor.



First the good news. As you get older, your chances of becoming the victim of violent crimes like murder, rape, and assault go way down. More than four out of five murder victims are under the age of 50.

Now the bad news. Age does nothing to decrease your chances of being burglarized or defrauded. If anything, your risk goes up, as some criminals target older people.

Burglary

The FBI reports that there were 3,168,179 home burglaries in 1989—about 1 for every 20 households! Here are some commonsense measures you can take to keep your home among the other 19—or to minimize the damage if you do suffer a break-in.

Secure your home. Nothing will stop a determined professional—but most burglars are unskilled opportunists. Good window and door locks, properly used, will deter most thieves. So will outside lights or a barking dog. Your local police department may provide you with literature on home security or even send someone to give your house a free inspection.

Don't advertise your absence. Burglars are experts at reading the signs that a house is unoccupied: notes left on the front door, outdated newspapers piling up, uncollected mail, missing trash cans on collection day, unanswered phones, no lights in the evening, empty driveways. With a little ingenuity and help from your friends, you can turn off these signals of your absence.

Mark your belongings. Engraving your Social Security or driver's license number on valuables makes them nearly worthless to burglars intent on reselling them. If you take this step, advertise the fact by posting warning stickers on your doors. Your police department may sponsor such an identification and notification program.

Protect your valuables. Store small valuables in a safe-deposit box or in an inconspicuous place like the basement. Lock guns in a sturdy cabinet. Don't keep more cash around than you need.

Avoid confrontation. If you notice evidence that a door or window has been forced, trampled shrubbery, lights turned off or on since you left, or other signs your home has been broken into, don't go in. Call the police and let them check it out first. If you're awakened by a suspicious noise, lock the bedroom door and dial 911.

Catalog your valuables. Keep a list of your possessions, with information like brand name and model, serial number, and purchase price, in a safe location—if anything is stolen, you'll need the information for the insurance claim. You should also check your homeowner's policy for limits on liability for items like art objects, business equipment, jewelry, or furs.

Fraud

While it's traumatic to have your home broken into, con artists are financially even more dangerous, because they can walk away with your life savings. In 1986, a foreign currency scam masterminded by a single operator swindled more than 50,000 people out of nearly $100 million!

Financial fraud. Ways to recognize investment scams were listed in depth in this column last December. The main message: "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

Home improvement scams. Be wary of any contractor who "just happened" to be in the neighborhood, "just happened" to notice your house needed some work, and "just happened" to have some supplies left over from another job. Legitimate home improvement businesses rarely need to go door-to-door looking for work.

Before you agree to let anyone work on your house, be sure to see a valid license. Ask for and check at least three references, and call the local consumer affairs office or the Better Business Bureau to see if anyone's complained about the business. Better yet, get written estimates from three competitors. And never pay in cash, or with a check made out to *Cash*.

Credit card fraud. Never give your credit card number to anyone who calls you on the phone. One trick involves a phone call from a "bank official" claiming a huge error has been discovered in your credit card account. The "official" can fix the problem, but needs the number on your card.

In another ruse, you're told you've won a prize in some distant city. You must come pick it up or, if you give them your credit card number, it can be shipped to you. In either case, instead of reading the number over the phone, tell the caller you'd rather mail it and ask for an address.

Uncharitable charities. A "charity" can keep nearly all the money it collects and still be legal. Crooks will set up an organization with a familiar-sounding name, solicit contributions with high-pressure phone and door-to-door tactics, but use only a few pennies of every dollar for the stated cause.

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Anna S. Ochoa, Editor
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*Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture; USDA Estimates of the Cost of Raising a Child, June 1989
†Active, Life, Reserve, Retired, Staff, Student and Substitute members in good standing.
NIE Life Plan is underwritten by the Prudential Insurance Company of America.

'Just Do It' Grants Announced

NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) is administering a $1 million 'Just Do It' grants program for teachers, funded by the NIKE athletic goods company.

The grants, ranging in amount from $5,000 to $25,000, will support creative grass-roots programs to motivate kids to stay in school. NFIE will distribute the money over the next three years.

NFIE Executive Director Donna Rhodes says that in looking at a grant proposal, NFIE will ask four questions:

► Did teachers design it, and will teachers carry it out?

► Will the project encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning?

► Will it challenge teachers to find ways of creating supportive environments for academic success?

► Will it connect self-esteem with academic achievement?

"We'll be looking for projects that can make a real difference in the lives of students," Rhodes sums up.

Guidelines and applications for the 'Just Do It' dropout prevention grants are available from NFIE, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. The deadline for proposals is April 1, 1991. First-year winners will be named in June and start their projects in September 1991.

Along with the 'Just Do It' Grants, NIKE is sponsoring a series of television ads, running this fall, that feature athletic superstars Bo Jackson, David Robinson, and Michael Jordan, along with other popular figures, pitching the value of education to the country's youth.

Contribute to the Davenport Scholarship Fund

The James M. Davenport Memorial Scholarship has been created to honor James Davenport, first president of the National Council for Higher Education and an active NEA member for more than 20 years.

The scholarship fund has been established at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Make checks payable to WCCF-Davenport Scholarship, the Washtenaw Community College Foundation, P.O. Box D-1, 4800 East Huron River Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

World AIDS Day Slated

The third annual World AIDS Day has been set for December 1, 1990. The United States is one of more than 150 countries that have set aside this day to draw public attention to the AIDS pandemic.

NEA is a U.S. cosponsor of the Day, along with the American Association for World Health, the Pan American Health Organization, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The theme of the 1990 observance is "Women and AIDS." An estimated 150,000 women have developed the disease since 1980, and 2 million are infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. During the decade an estimated 200,000 infants were born with HIV infection contracted from their mothers.

The Day's theme also acknowledges women's role in preventing infection with HIV and in caring for people with HIV infection or with AIDS.

The American Association for World Health is producing a free kit for observances. It contains background information, activities suggestions, a resource directory for AIDS educational materials, sample press releases and proclamations, and the 1990 poster.

To get on the mailing list for World AIDS Day, send your name and address to the American Association for World Health, 2001 S Street, N.W., Suite 530, Dept. A90, Washington, DC 20009.

National Humanities Center Offers Summer Institute

The National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, will sponsor a special summer institute for high school global studies teachers from June 23 to July 13, 1991.

Entitled "The Colonial Experience: A Framework for Teaching Non-Western History," the seminar will draw on the histories of Latin America, India, and Africa to offer new ways to present cultures of the developing world. It will be taught by scholars from Johns Hopkins University, Michigan State University, and the University of Cincinnati.

The Center will provide travel expenses, lodging, most meals, texts, and a stipend of $750. The application deadline is March 1, 1991. To apply, write or call the National Humanities Center, P.O. Box 12256, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 (919/549-0661).

Materials for Martin Luther King Holiday Available

Once again NEA members can buy posters and brochures from the Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday Commission at reduced rates.

Order soon for a special NEA version of the poster suggesting activities for affiliates and members—if you're too late, you'll get the standard version.

Prices. Posters: 1-10, $4.00 each; 11-20, $3.50 each; 21 or more, $2.50 each. Brochures: 25 (the minimum order)-99, $.37 each; 100-499, $.32 each; 500 or more, $.27 each.

To order, send your name, address, phone number, and payment (made out to Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday Commission) to Freedom Trail, 8391 Main St., P.O. Box 302, Ellicott City, MD 21043 (301/596-5253).

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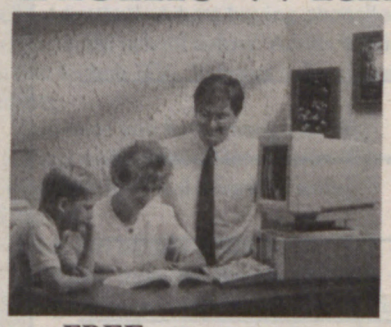

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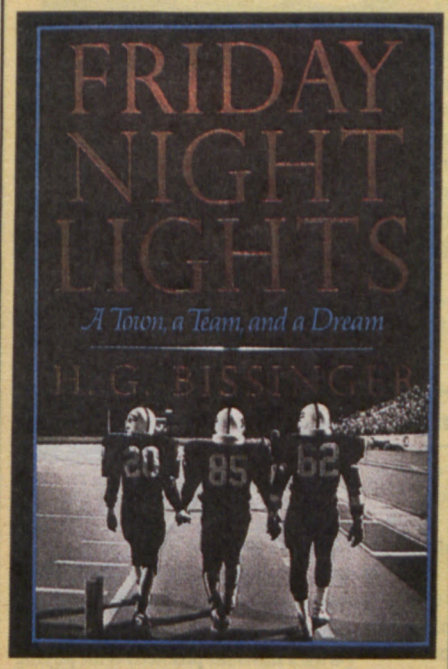
BOOK BEAT

High School Football: The Lasting Temptation

Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream
By H. G. Bissinger
Addison-Wesley. 357 pp. $19.95.

In 1988 the Permian High School Panthers of Odessa, Texas, were a good bet to win the Texas 5A football championship. So good that Philadelphia reporter H. G. Bissinger moved his wife and kids to Odessa for a year to get the story. He'd always wanted, he said, to go to one of those towns where football on Friday nights holds the town together.



Bissinger found Odessa to be that kind of town. Where an assistant coach will tell the team—and it will be true: "Later in life, they can take away your house, they can take away your car, but they can't take this kind of stuff away from you."

This kind of stuff? Immortality, the chance to become a legend in your own place, in your own time.

But when legends are in the making, not just the players but the whole town wants to be part of that process.

Which explains the temptation of high school football: Adults buying phonebook covers in the school colors. Adults waiting in line in their RVs 36 hours to buy season tickets.

And once you have enough adults yielding to the football temptation, there's a tendency for local priorities to be distorted.

What can happen is that—

► Young men like Boobie (a Black running back), who have no future in mind except football, will end up with no future at all when injury ends their hopes for a pro career.

► Young women will dumb themselves down to serve as cheering consorts to the boy athletes. (Permian girls have SAT scores 75 points lower than Permian boys.)

► A math teacher—not in Odessa but in a rival high school in Dallas—will have his career ruined when he refuses to change a grade to keep a football player eligible to play.

Still, some Odessans, including football players, fight the hype and remember that football is just a high school sport. Bissinger tracks down two such seniors on the 1988 team: Brian Chavez and Ivory Christian, who pursue their chosen futures at Harvard and Texas Christian, respectively.

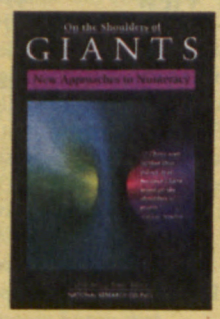
Bissinger's story is an involving one, about a well-coached, determined, ethnically varied team that's aiming for the top prize in Texas. I won't give away how they made out in the 1988 season.

But if you find yourself checking your maps to see just how far Odessa is from here anyhow, forget it for this year. The Permian Panthers, defending 5A champions (they won in 1989), won't be in the 1990 finals for sure. Their coaches were caught conducting supervised practices before August 20, so the school's been barred from post-season play.

—Nancy R. Needham
Book Review Editor

and also ...

On the Shoulders of Giants: New Approaches to Numeracy
Edited by Lynn Arthur Steen
For the National Research Council
National Academy Press. 250 pp. $17.95.

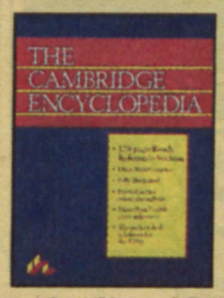


Taking a fresh look at your district's math program? This is your book. Editor Lynn Arthur Steen, St. Olaf College math professor, says let's teach math in five parallel strands: dimension, quantity, uncertainty, shape, and change.

Present the patterns that are math's subject over and over in ever more sophisticated understandings.

The implication: math is something you think about in one K-12 chunk.

The Cambridge Encyclopedia
Edited by David Crystal
Cambridge University Press.
1,500 pp. $49.50.



A new one-volume encyclopedia, with 30,000 main entries, plus a Ready Reference section (which lists natural landmarks, prime ministers, champions, etc.) and a slick section on the "Uses of Colour" in art (e.g., computer graphics) and nature (e.g., animal's skins).

To see what's available from the NEA Professional Library Book Club, look to the left.

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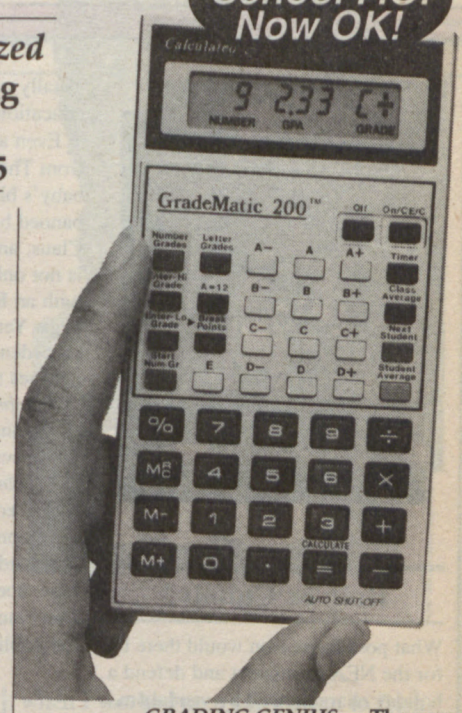

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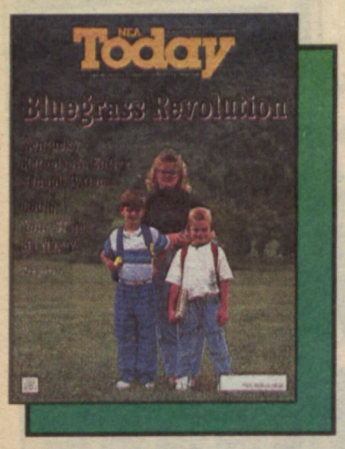
Letters



Holy or Unholy?

What possible reason would there be for the NEA to support and defend a holiday characterized by vandalism, maliciousness, and actual deeds of evil ("The 'Horrors' of Halloween," October)?

Halloween was a pagan holiday in which animals and humans were sacrificed, witches paid homage to the devil, and children played pranks and destroyed property. It honored a deity, the lord of the dead.

There's been a great resurgence of witchcraft lately. Many young people seeking a thrill get involved with satanism. Their curiosity about the occult, fostered in part by the reading material in the schools, may extend as far as harming others or even harming themselves. Be assured, it is no game, and, once involved, it is not easy to get out.

Yes, the anti-satanists and right wing extremists, as you so aptly characterize them, are getting involved, and it's about time.

Too many young people, not knowing right from wrong, are being adversely affected by the negative values being taught in our public schools. All you have to do is look at the moral dilemma that our country is in today.

A month from now, most schools won't even acknowledge that Christmas exists. And we are constantly bombarded with what we *cannot* talk and sing about so as not to offend anyone.

Why would an organization that supposedly represents the best for our children encourage the celebration of the dark side and ignore the light?

An "attack on public education?" Hardly. The reality is that many of us (teachers included) are finally speaking out on what will and will not inspire our children to become better citizens in their school and community.

Karen Collins
Germantown, Maryland

In your October article "The 'Horrors' of Halloween," you criticize the media, anti-satanists, right-wing and religious extremists because of publicity about and opposition to Halloween. In the final paragraph you say "anti-satanist activity (is) ... usually ... an attack on public education."

Even a generic God is banned from Thanksgiving recognition; the baby's birth at Christmas is not only banned but is secularized by Santa Claus; and the resurrection at Easter is not only banned but secularized with an Easter Bunny and Easter eggs. Yet Halloween has a religious precedent and the public school chooses to recognize this day.

Number One: Is the public school practicing religion by Halloween observances?

Number Two: Goals of public school education result in curriculum development. Teachers are supposed to be tied closely to curriculum goals. How does the practice of Halloween observances fit into the curriculum of the public school?

Harry K. Perry
East Rochester, Ohio

A Better Choice?

I wonder why you chose Ronald Kleinman of Harvard as your authority on vitamins ("What About Vitamins?", October). Considering the money that the processed food industry contributes to the Harvard School of Nutrition, the orthodox line of the article was predictable.

I'd rather take the advice of Roger Williams of the University of Texas, a distinguished biochemist who has spent his life studying nutrition, or Dr. Linus Pauling, the distinguished Nobel Prize winner, than that of a doctor who spouts the line of the AMA (American Medical Association) and the Harvard School of Nutrition, which is funded by the processed food industry.

Bill Sightes
La Porte, Indiana

Teaching's Not Fun

For a long time I've been bothered by the demands "Make teaching fun," "Make learning fun" (Debate, September). I never thought teaching was fun. I thought it was the hardest job I ever had, and the most enjoyable. But if you tell people that teaching is supposed to be fun, of course eventually they'll end up saying: "I want to stop. It's not fun anymore."

It was not until I read an article by the dancer Jacques d'Amboise in *Parade* Magazine (September 23, 1990) that I found the words to describe why "teaching is fun" bothers me so much. He said: "We lose sight of the difference between fun and joy. Fun is frivolous. Joy is precious and profound."

Teaching is not frivolous. Teaching is work. It is the hardest job there is. Learning is work. We try to make it enjoyable, interesting, exciting, motivating, relevant, palatable, etc. But any way you slice it, it's work.

What's wrong with work? We all have to work. Work can be as interesting and enjoyable as we can make it. School needs to become a place where work is enjoyable.

Ray Rasmussen
Miami, Florida

Another View

A debate such as the one in your September issue is obviously colored by two different situations and educational settings. Why should we need to hear that teaching is "fun" where technology is and "not fun" where students lack home support? This is obvious.

Sandra Plaskon
San Diego, California

Taking Exception

In your September issue a teacher complained that his class couldn't camp free in a national park. He also complained about retirees with large campers in the parks.

I'm a retired teacher, also a senior citizen. My husband and I travel in a 25-foot travel trailer. True, we do get a few discounts—a Golden Age Pass, a few 10 percent or sometimes 50 percent reductions at National Forest campgrounds—but when people reach this "golden age" of retirement, they've earned the right to some consideration. I certainly couldn't live on my Washington State teacher's pension. We worked and saved some 40 years to have this privilege of travelling in our trailer. It costs big bucks to tow our rig.

There's no "free lunch" anywhere—someone pays. So we're enjoying our retirement years and hope other teachers can save enough to enjoy theirs.

Evelyn Elliot
Seattle, Washington

More about Money

I'm most impressed with the current *NEA Today* format. It has informative, well written articles, which as a retired teacher, I especially appreciate.

However, the paper might consider adding a finance section, which might include information about the following: Voluntary Employee Benefit Act (VEBA), COBRA (Medical Insurance Coverage), options on 403B plans (retirement at 55 or above or below 55).

At a time when educators are not receiving the financial rewards they deserve, they may make use of the above and improve their financial status.

Bill De Hon
Mount Vernon, Washington

More Info, Please

In your September issue you reported on a book by Carol Gilligan entitled *Making Connections: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School*. I was fascinated. Would you please supply information about the publisher?

Lucy Fuchs
Brandon, Florida

Ed note: Professor Gilligan's book was published this year by Harvard University Press, 79 Garden St., Cambridge, MA 02138.

How About a Solution?

As a paraprofessional, I was very interested in the article in your March issue, "Who Is a Paraprofessional?".

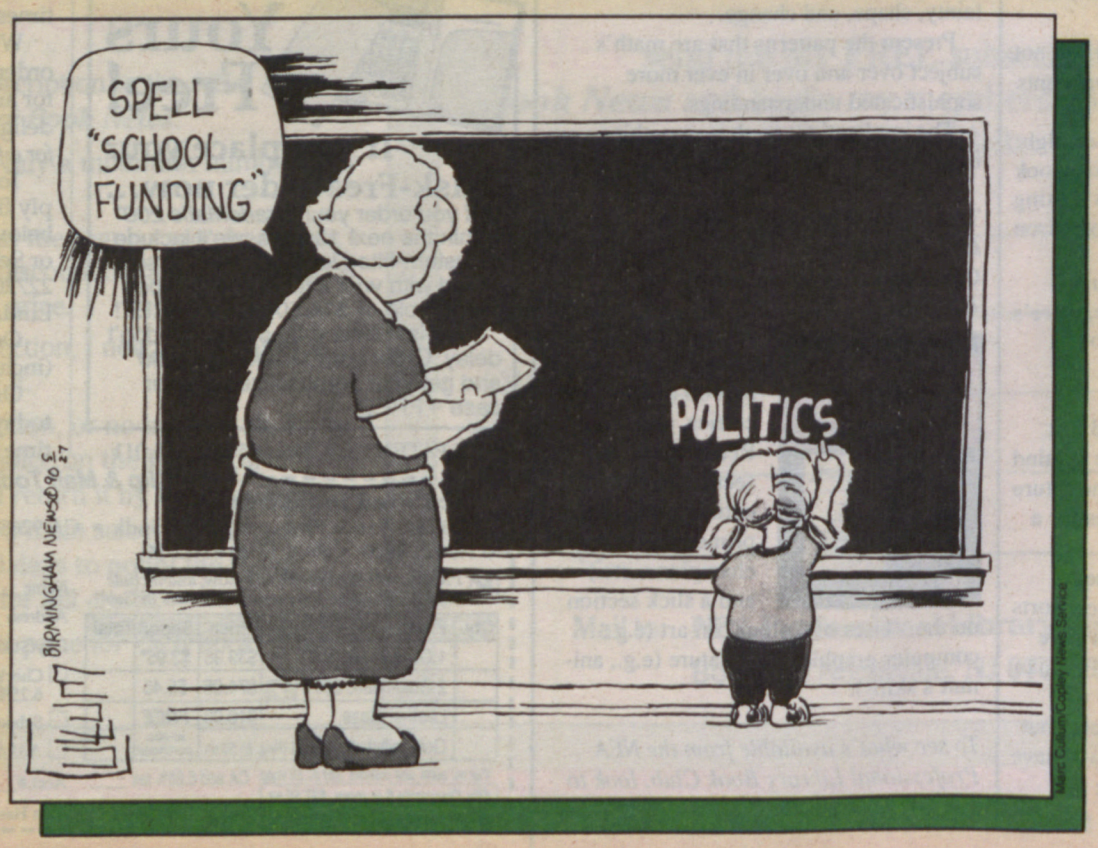
The article was very enlightening. We thought we were the only ones who felt we weren't being paid enough. But it's sad, too: if you complain too much, you know you can easily be replaced.

Now that the problem of low salaries is out in the open, what do we do? Oh, we'll probably get a five-cent-an-hour raise, but then our insurance is likely to go up and of course our retirement contributions will. I have no problem with paying for retirement—if I could also get some additional benefits.

If the need for paraprofessionals is increasing, then why isn't the pay scale evaluated more often?

I appreciate your having published the original article. All our paraprofessionals enjoyed reading it, but they were also sad, because it just left us hanging without a solution.

Brenda Bradley
Springfield, Georgia



We Need Your Ideas

In recent years, successful community service projects have emerged in many schools across the United States. NEA is now compiling an information packet on school-based community service projects that work.

If you have information on a successful project you would like to share, please send your material to: Community Service Project, NEA Publishing, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

What's *your* opinion? NEA members are cordially invited to use this page to exchange ideas with their colleagues around the nation. We reserve the right to edit letters for length. Address correspondence to "Letters," *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Debate

Should Undergraduates Preparing To Teach Major in Education?

YES

Joe Di Dio

Ben Gipson is a junior at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, and a Texas Student Education Association activist. The 1984 Texas school reform bill outlawed undergraduate education majors. Still, Gipson finds ways to prepare for a career in schools.

NO

Jane Berns, a veteran special education teacher, teaches at Valle Verde Elementary School in Walnut Creek, California, where she's an active member of the Mount Diablo Education Association. Berns was educated in her native New York State, then taught in New York City.

Whether or not your undergraduate courses are labeled "education," if you're going to be a teacher you should be preparing to think like a professional in education. It's never too soon to start.

For a teacher, it's not enough to learn about biology or history or English. You need a much broader perspective on the educational process than simply being able to disgorge facts about the subjects you studied in college.

It's one thing to know a subject and quite another to teach it in our educational system as it is today. The incoming teacher must be more well-rounded than it's possible to become simply by majoring in a discipline.

You need, for example, to understand the children you're teaching your subject to. Not only is a child's thinking different from an adult's, but a five-year-old's is different from a seven-year-old's. If you haven't studied Piaget, Kohlberg, and Erikson, you won't really know that.

Also, teachers devote most of their planning time, not to thinking about the exact material to be presented, but rather to how to present it. They have to decide what kind of classroom atmosphere, what style of classroom management will give students the best opportunity to absorb the material.

And even if you're going to teach secondary school, there's no reason why a 24-semester-hour minor in your subject won't give you an ample knowledge base with which to begin.

Future teachers also need comprehensive knowledge of the nature of the teaching profession. You won't get this if you spend your four years thinking only of, say, mathematics. Would-be teachers need to be exposed to issues facing American education.

Because such questions interest me as an undergraduate, I've been active in the TCU chapter of TSEA, the student NEA/TSTA affiliate. I've been a student delegate at the NEA convention. That opportunity gave me a chance to get a well-defined perspective on the teacher's role. Just seeing what issues interest the delegates is an education in professionalism.

As for my own professional plans, I want to teach in high school: psychology, life management, reading techniques. Since I can't major in education, I'm majoring in psychology—child development—with a minor in computer science. I think that's a combination that will be marketable. And although I can't major in education, I can take education courses.

Together, the education and computer science courses will prepare me to confront a key issue that's ready for resolution: the role of computers in education. Computers can be abused. Right now the task is to distinguish between what should and what shouldn't be done with them. Educators and programmers come from different backgrounds. There's a wide gap—I'd like to be a bridge.

For instance, educators know that people learn best by internalizing concepts, not repeating facts. Learners attach meaning to new information—and then link it to what they already know. Computer programmers may not know this. Too many computer programs seem to be just based on memorization—vocabulary words and definitions are an example.

I grew up with severe learning disabilities. After some initial faltering, my school put together a wonderful curriculum for me. I've tried to reconstruct my childhood perspective on what teachers do that works—and what doesn't. I'm going to try to remember, so I won't be like so many adults—who seem to present material to kids inappropriately.

I think the secret of effective teaching is getting into the child's mind—through reflection on your own childhood experience, through observation of other children, and through study. There is simply no reason why anyone should postpone the observation and the study to get four years of so-called "liberal" education.

Much to my surprise, I couldn't major in education as an undergraduate. At the time that came as a shock, but over the years I've come to think I was lucky.

I'd always wanted to be a teacher, so I eagerly entered Hunter College, City University of New York, to prepare for a career in early childhood education. I looked forward to college life, even though I faced a three-hour daily commute via bus, ferryboat, and subway (Hunter's in Manhattan and I lived on Staten Island—before the two islands were connected by a bridge).

It was a shock to find out that the City University didn't offer an undergraduate major in education. I could minor in education, but I'd have to major in liberal arts. I ended up with a 24-credit major in sociology and a 32-credit minor in education.

I spent the first two-and-a-half years meeting all the liberal arts requirements of City University. At times it was difficult to see a connection between the esoterica presented to me and the skills I knew I needed to deal with the K-3 kids I dreamed of teaching. What did I need from art history? I thought.

But I was wrong. I came out ahead having had both liberal arts and—in graduate school—education courses. (Later I got master's degrees in elementary education and special education.)

I use everything I learned in the liberal arts classrooms. The smattering of Spanish has provided me with the ability to communicate with parents during parent-teacher conferences and to send short notes home with students. Often just the attempt to communicate has broken the ice for me with an uncertain, embarrassed parent and a frightened new student.

Sociology, my undergraduate major, has provided me with an understanding and knowledge of the values, lifestyles, and expectations of other cultures and has been helpful in my work in multicultural, multiethnic schools.

Even art history paid off. Last year when I worked on a curriculum to flesh out the state art matrix, it was helpful to remember that Kandinsky or Seurat, for instance, could be used to make a particular point about rhythm, pattern, or color.

Of course, an undergraduate majoring in liberal arts can do things outside class to prepare for a teaching career.

I did volunteer work at the Lenox Hill Settlement House. I took piano lessons (I knew early childhood teachers had a piano practicum to pass.) Working at Lenox Hill with low-income inner-city children prepared me for the problems I faced as a young New York City teacher working in the More Effective Schools and Head Start programs of the '60s. And again when I moved to California and taught eight years in a Chapter 1 school, I fell back on the experiences of my Lenox Hill days.

In our teaching we're often asked "to roll with the punches," "to make bricks without straw," "to be creative and make do." It always helps to have a very large information bank on which to draw. I believe it's the responsibility of the university to nurture this fund of information in its undergraduate students. I don't think this can be done as effectively if students major in education at the undergraduate level. City University was right not to let us do so.

I believe I'm a better teacher and person because of the knowledge and understandings in different disciplines developed by a broad liberal arts undergraduate education.

This past summer in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, here in California, teachers participated in workshops entitled Thoughtful Education. Colleagues report that those groups were working on ways to refine divergent and convergent thinking. That has always seemed to me another way of referring to a broad-based liberal arts education.

Perhaps we're developing a liberal arts education for younger children—at a much earlier stage even than the college or university level. If so, it's a good idea.

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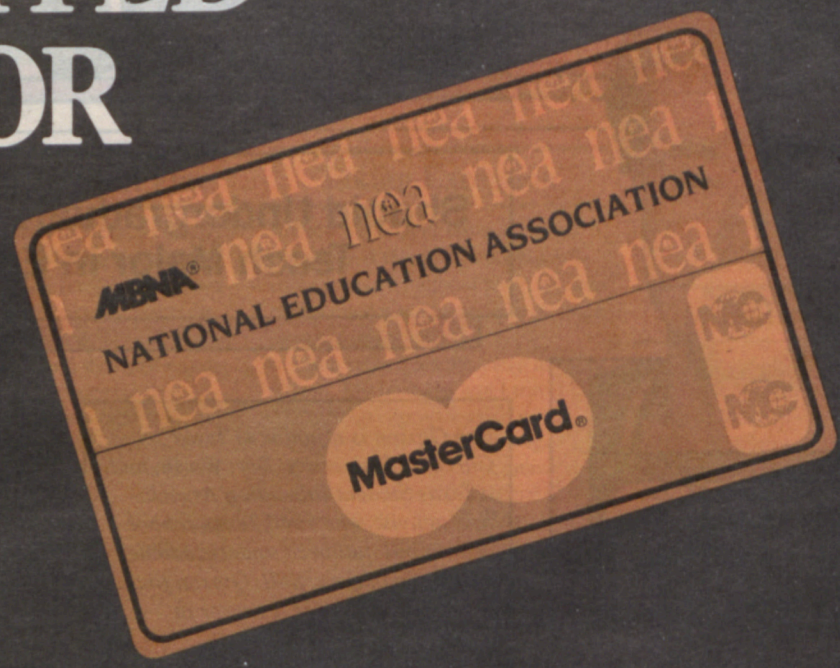

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